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JESUIT SAINTS OF 1888:

BEING LIVES OF

ST. PETER CLAVER,

ST. ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ,

AND

ST. JOHN BERCHMANS,

Canonized by Leo XIII. Jan. 15, 1888.

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St. Peter Claver,

("The Apostle of the Negroes,")

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

(1580–1654).

BY THE REV. FATHER SOLA, OF THE SAME SOCIETY.

I. THE PREPARATION.

THE city of Cartagena, on the northern shore of South America, was, during the 17th century, the central point of the struggle in which the nations of Europe were engaged for the wealth of the new world. Its enormous harbour made it the market for all the treasures of Mexico, Peru, Potosi, and the Islands of the Western Indies, and it became the scene of the most hideous traffic that ever disgraced the name of man and cried to heaven for vengeance. But in the midst of the wickedness of Cartagena God raised up a witness to Himself. Where all was avarice, corruption, greed and cruelty, a Saint was found, who was for forty years the visible sign of God's protecting Providence to hundreds of thousands of the most abject, the most abandoned of his creatures; whose voice was the only one to pierce through that Babel of the world's loud cries, and bring a message of peace and pardon to their souls.

1580. Peter Claver, "the slave of the slaves for ever," as he named himself in the formula of his religious profession, was born at Verdu near Barcelona, in Spain, in June of the year 1580. The child, consecrated from his birth to God by his good parents, was forestalled from his earliest days by the blessings of grace, and passed his first happy years in the simple village life. As his

character developed it showed only fresh beauty to the admiring eyes of his father and mother: who, seeing something of the promise of the gifts with which he was endowed, resolved to carry out the offering they had made, and send him to pursue his studies with a view to the priesthood. He went first to the neighbouring cathedral city of Solsona, where one of his uncles was a canon, and passed many years under the tutelage of this holy priest, laying a solid foundation of early education and advancing daily in virtue. He returned frequently to Verdu, both giving and receiving an equal amount of pleasure in these visits. It was noted that after his First Communion a change was visible in his whole deportment, a deepening of the recollection that always distinguished him, a more careful avoidance of useless conversations and games. It was clear to all that he was marked out for God, and his parents yielded to the desire of the canon of Solsona by sending him to Barcelona, at that time in much resort by scholars, where the boy would have every advantage in cultivating his many gifts. It was here that he learnt to know the Society of Jesus, and his heart was soon captivated by the holy examples offered by the lives of the Fathers at the College of Belen in that city, where at this time a great effort was being made by them to introduce the practice of frequent communion, then unusual in the country. He joined the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, and was thus initiated into the higher paths of the spiritual life, particularly by the practice of mortification, penance, works of mercy and prayer. His vocation to a religious life remained undecided in his heart, until minor orders were conferred upon him by the Bishop. He felt a desire to join the Society, and never so strongly as when praying in the Jesuits' church before a picture into which the figures of St. Ignatius (then not fifty years dead) and some of the first fathers of the Society were introduced: but the desire remained a secret between himself and God, and a deep sense of his unworthiness prevented him from offering himself for admission. At the ceremony, however, with the grace of minor orders came a flood of heavenly light

into his soul that banished hesitation. After fervent prayer he made known to the Rector his wish to join the Society, and in August, 1602, entered the noviceship at Tarragona.

No incidents are recorded of Peter's noviceship that single him out from the others who were with him during the two years he passed at Tarragona. He was a perfect novice, and therefore the most obedient, the most laborious, the humblest, and the most hidden. The lessons he learnt at Tarragona were the foundation of all his future life. Submissive, faithful, lowly was he then; and the worn-out apostle dying after years of arduous work was only more complete in his submission, more minute in his fidelity, more abject in his lowliness.

He kept a little book in which he noted sometimes the lights received in prayer. Amongst other entries occur the following: "Four rules to be kept by a novice of the Society.

"First: to seek God in all things, and try to find Him in all.

"Second: to employ all one's strength in attaining the most perfect obedience, interior and exterior, subjecting the will and judgment to Superiors as to Christ our Lord Himself.

"Third: to do all for the greater glory of God.

"Fourth: to seek nothing in this world but what Christ our Lord sought there. As He came on earth to save souls and died for them on the cross, we should try to gain them for Him, for this joyfully offering ourselves to any labour and to death itself; receiving with contentment and joy of heart for the love of Christ any insult that may be offered us, and desiring that they may be many, yet so that we give no cause for them on our part and that there be no offence to God."

Towards the end of his noviceship, Peter, according to the usual custom of the Society of Jesus, was to make some practical proof of the love of poverty, humility and suffering he had been seeking to acquire, by setting out with a companion on a pilgrimage. They were to go unprovided with money or any provision for the journey,

begging their way and lodging at nightfall in the hospitals. The shrine that fell to Peter Claver's lot as the object of his pilgrimage was that of our Lady of Montserrat.

This sanctuary is situated on a mountain about 4000 feet in height, which, with jagged peaks, towers over the city and port of Barcelona. It has since the 9th century been a place of pilgrimage and veneration, for it was one of the chosen sites miraculously designated by the Mother of God as a spot on which she desired to be honoured. It is indeed a holy mountain; for its rugged and "serrated" sides are studded with hermitages, the abodes of prayer and penance, and half way up stands the monastery of Benedictine monks and the church containing the miraculous statue. It had another attraction in Peter Claver's eyes as in those of all pilgrims since the days of St. Ignatius; for it was here that the saint before entering on his life-long campaign against her enemies, kept his vigil as our Lady's knight before her altar. Two or three days were spent at this shrine by Peter Claver, and to the end of his life he would recall even with tears of joy the happiness that this visit gave him, and the graces obtained for him at Montserrat by our Blessed Lady.

1604. He made his vows on the 8th of August. "I consecrate myself to God till death," he wrote at that time, "looking on myself henceforth as a slave whose whole office lies in being at the service of his master, and working with all my soul, body and mind to please and satisfy Him in all and by all." Shortly afterwards he went to the Jesuit Seminary at Gerona, where he soon so distinguished himself by his abilities as to be employed as a professor. The following year he went to Majorca. His superiors sent him thither to pursue his course of philosophy; but God, whilst endorsing their wishes in this respect, had other designs upon this chosen servant.

Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez,* lay brother and porter

* See his Life, issued in the same series as the present.

at the College of Montexion at Palma, in Majorca, was now drawing towards the close of his life of heroic virtue. He received from God the glorious task of moulding to its great work the heart of the Apostle of the Negroes. Peter Claver's soul, when the young scholastic arrived at Majorca, was a rich soil perfectly prepared to receive the seeds of grace that were implanted in it by his holy master; and the joy of the aged saint, on meeting with the disciple who was to receive the inheritance of his spiritual wealth, was very great. The heart of Alphonsus was on fire with apostolic zeal, but age and its infirmities were weighing on him, and his work in this world was almost done. What a reward for his long years of humble patience to be able to enkindle this consuming fire in a young and ardent heart; to inspire with this unquenchable thirst for souls one whose life was still before him, to awaken to a high vocation a courage and energies capable of any work! The future was known to Rodriguez, and St. Peter, model as he was of every virtue, was in his eyes crowned with a halo invisible to all but him, a halo of heroic sacrifice, of abnegation carried to its utmost length, of devotion to a life of toil, of labour and of suffering that made him a living image of his crucified Redeemer.

Peter Claver, to whom the renown of the sanctity of Alphonsus was well known, had rejoiced exceedingly at finding that his lot was cast for awhile under the same roof; and he sought and obtained permission to have every day a quarter of an hour's talk with him. He soon found that the great things said of Alphonsus were far surpassed by the reality; and Alphonsus on his side treated his young disciple as an equal and a friend. These interviews not only trained Peter and taught him many things then, but afforded food for his soul and light for his mind throughout his whole after-life. He noted down most carefully the thoughts and teaching of Alphonsus, adding even sometimes the date of the day when the words were said; and the little books in which these notes were made he carried with him everywhere and through everything, often referring to them for strength

and renewal of spirit, and bequeathing them as treasures on his death-bed to those by whom he knew they would be valued.

Space does not allow of our reproducing here these precious notes, which contain so much of the doctrine of St. Alphonsus. Their spirit is that which characterizes the sanctity of their author, the absolute and sovereign dominion of God over us on the one hand, and the humility, submission and self-conquest that are necessary on our side, that we may not in any way be wanting in the worship we owe to our Creator. This fundamental thought of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius is the principle of all Christian as well as of all spiritual life. It makes men saints, apostles, missionaries, martyrs, and the more clearly and forcibly it takes possession of the mind the more powerfully it operates upon the will. The plenitude of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart and soul of Alphonsus gave his words a power that seemed well nigh sacramental, so marvellously did they operate in the souls of his hearers. He seemed to transmit not only the thought, but its very effect in his own soul, and thus through his words he communicated the reflection of the celestial favours he himself received. His influence upon a soul already so holy as that of Peter Claver cannot be exaggerated: and our Saint himself acknowledged it by the devotion, veneration and love he always felt for him whom he never spoke of otherwise than as his "holy master."

The will of God with regard to Peter Claver was revealed to Alphonsus, and with all the assurance thus obtained he spoke to him of the Indies—the souls perishing, the harvest plentiful, the labourers so few, the toil so great, how abundant the sufferings and the reward how overflowing. Every word he uttered found an echo in Peter's soul, and awakened an intense longing to offer himself for the mission: a longing which his humility and sense of his own worthlessness might have kept latent, had it not been brought to light by the assurance of Alphonsus that it was God's will for him to go in search of these perishing souls, redeemed by the Blood of Christ.

He was then just at the end of his course of philosophy, which he finished with great applause by being selected out of all the students to defend a public thesis—a task of which he acquitted himself to the admiration of all. Before leaving Majorca he wrote to the Provincial offering himself for the foreign missions. The answer postponed any decision on the question until he should have come to Barcelona, where he was to begin the study of theology.

Two years of waiting followed, during which time his desire for the missions increased in intensity, and he constantly renewed his request to be sent. In 1609 an order came from the Father-General of the Society of Jesus, Father Claudius Acquaviva, that from each province in Spain a missionary should be sent to recruit the recently-founded province in the New World. St. Peter Claver was selected for the province of Arragon; and in April, 1610, he set out with his companions from the port of Seville.

Two incidents in connection with his departure show how far he carried his spirit of detachment from the world. Although his parents were still living within a few leagues of Barcelona, when he passed through that city he neither warned them of his coming, nor took leave of them.

When the shores of Spain vanished from the gaze of those on the deck of the sailing-vessel that took them westward across the ocean, all memory of the land of his birth seemed to fade from the mind and heart of Peter Claver. He never spoke of the past, except some incidents of his religious life, and never asked for news.

As often happens in life, St. Peter's work on his first arrival in the New World was very different from what he anticipated. He was not yet ordained, for at Seville, having deep in his heart the desire of passing his life in the Society as a lay-brother, he had besought and obtained a postponement of ordination, which was to have been there conferred upon him.

On his arrival at Cartagena he was sent to the city

of Santa Fé de Bogota to finish his course of studies, whilst his companions, who were priests, began at once their missionary labours.

Labour, however, was not wanting to Peter Claver. The Jesuits' house at Santa Fé was scarcely founded, and was wanting in everything. The studious solitude of Barcelona seemed very removed from this seminary where, over and above his studies, Claver was called on to perform the greater part of the domestic work of the house. The student of theology was likewise porter, sacristan and cook. He was rejoiced at these offices, and he combined one with another and with his studies with extraordinary dexterity, hoping in his inmost heart that when his superiors saw his fitness for them they would allow him to continue them throughout his life. His success however in theology, under the very holy and distinguished Professor, Father Antony Augustin, was so great that his superiors, filled with admiration for his virtues and talents, decided after his final examination, to admit him to profession. The professed Fathers in the Society of Jesus are of two grades. In the higher of them, to the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience taken by all, is added the vow of obedience to the Holy See. St. Peter Claver was deeply grieved at the honour conferred upon him when he was told that he was to belong to the higher grade. He refused as far as in him lay, but was obliged to submit. His profession took place in 1622. And to the four vows he added a fifth, "to devote himself for ever to the salvation of the negroes." His third year of noviceship was passed in the newly founded noviciate of the Society at Tunja: and at its close he returned to Cartagena, where he soon received the order to begin his retreat before his ordination. He received the priesthood in March, 1616.

Hitherto Peter Claver had but received. The formation the Society gives her sons is long; but it was complete at last, and henceforward his only thought was what he could give. The retreat which he had just made marked a change in his life that might be compared to that

from dawn to noon. Holy as his life had been, henceforth it was heroic, since every action was stamped with a supernatural fortitude that enabled him to exercise a charity that may well be called divine. His life is written in deeds not words. As we follow him through his ministry we must not expect to hear him speak. His vocation was not that of preacher or reformer. He was a living witness to God's mercy in the midst of unequalled misery, a vindication of His Providence in the face of man's oppression, a channel of His grace to hundreds of thousands of abandoned souls, an example of what in Father Faber's words, one man can accomplish who has received "by nature an enthusiastic, loving heart, and from grace the magnificent gift of living solely and entirely for God."

II. THE APOSTOLATE.

1622. At the time when St. Peter was sent to the Jesuits' College at Cartagena, that part was the Liverpool of South America. Every galleon of the then greatest kingdom in the world was forced by a law of the monarchs of Spain to touch there on their outward voyage to the Western Hemisphere. The quays of that tropical city were crowded by the sailors and merchants, the sea captains and soldiers of Spain—Italians, Flemings, Spaniards; the white man, the black, the copper coloured, all full of work and athirst for gold and pleasure. Almost every vessel that came into the harbour had a terrible but precious cargo—a living freight, or rather a dying one—for in the tomb-like hold, in the deep, dark and fetid prison, through the long passage in the torrid heat, huddled and crushed together, were packed some eight or nine hundred men, women and children, a reeking mass of corrupting humanity.

Horrors untold had they gone through in the cruel slave hunt, and then in the terrible march down to the African coast, leaving the prisoners starved and worn out, ill-prepared for a yet more terrible voyage. And when

at length they are brought on shore, covered with open wounds and alive with vermin, they meet with as little pity from the white man who buys them, as from the slave catchers who had bartered them for beads and gewgaws. With their limbs almost powerless from long confinement they are dragged to the slave market to be sold again like beasts of burden. Ten or twelve thousand negroes were landed yearly at Cartagena to be transported to the West Indian Isles or to the mines of Peru.

It was to these poor wretches that St. Peter Claver for nearly forty years devoted his life. He served his apprenticeship in his heroic work under Father Alphonso de Sandoval, a most holy and zealous Jesuit, whose health had been miraculously restored to him by St. Ignatius that he might labour for the salvation of the negroes, and who for many years endeavoured with active and tender charity to lighten their load of misery, and above all, to save their souls. In seven years he is said to have baptized more than thirty thousand. At the time of Peter Claver's arrival in Cartagena, soon after his ordination, an order had just arrived from Father Mutius Vitelleschi, General of the Society, that some other Jesuits should be named to work with him, that his admirable methods of dealing with the negroes should be perpetuated. Peter Claver volunteered for this. He was accepted, and thus began his life-long work. After a year spent in laboring under Father de Sandoval the latter was called elsewhere, and the whole devolved upon Father Claver, the spirit of the master descending upon him fourfold.

His love for the negroes soon became so well known in Cartagena that upon the arrival of a slave ship the principal authorities would vie with one another in the endeavour to be the first to bring him the news, knowing that the reward was nine Masses. They loved also to see the effect upon him: his pale face ignited up with pleasure, his eyes sparkled, he grew young again. He first knelt to thank God for having brought them safely to land, and then busied himself with preparations. He

enquired of what race they were that he might get the right interpreters; and then he provided what he called the "bait" by which they might be caught, for he always said they must be spoken to first by the hand with gifts. Provided with a large store of refreshing drinks, fruit, preserves, lemons, brandy and tobacco, he would go down to the quay and wait the first moment when it would be possible to go on board. The negroes who survived the horrors of the passage were almost crazed by its suffering. They thought that fresh atrocities awaited them, and were prepared for any cruelty. Claver appeared to these besotted or ferocious natures as an angel of charity, whose greeting was the first to meet them on this foreign shore. There was no mistaking the genuine love that shone in Father Claver's eyes, as he clasped them in his arms and ministered so tenderly to their wants. They recognized it, and when they heard his assurances by the mouth of those of their own nation whom he brought with him, that no harm was meant them, and that he would himself be their protector, friend and father, they listened as if spell bound. He then distributed the provisions, and next enquired whether any children had been born during the voyage, and whether there were any at the point of death. The children he baptized, and if the sick were already Christians he confessed and prepared them for death, if not Christians he instructed and baptized them; many, as it seemed, only waited for this grace to die. He remained a long time with those who were ill, feeding them with his own hands, paying them every attention that their extreme need and his own charity could suggest, winning their hearts and those of the bystanders, who almost envied the sick when they saw how tenderly Father Claver cared for them.

When the day came for the disembarkation of the negroes, Peter Claver was again at the quay with interpreters and provisions as before. As soon as the poor creatures descried him they scrambled up the masts and rigging to get a better sight of him, clapping their hands by way of salute. He would hold out his hand to them to help them to jump down, would receive them in his

arms and give them the kiss of peace. He had provided low carts for the sick and he saw to their being conveyed to these, and thus when all was ready he took them to their dwellings. These, alas! were scarcely better than the hold of the ship they had quitted, but at least they were not confined there for so long.

Early next morning Father Claver, after saying Mass, set out in his thread-bare cassock, a bronze crucifix upon his breast, carrying two bags slung across his back, and in his hand a staff surmounted by a cross. One of the bags contained a surplice, a stole, holy oils, rosaries, etc. The other, biscuits, fruit, brandy, scented-water and other comforts or refreshments for the sick. Though thus laden he walked so quickly that his companion and the interpreters could scarcely keep pace with him. His first enquiries were for the sick, and when he had done all he could for them he looked after the rest.

Having assembled them all in a large court-yard he erected an altar on which he placed pictures fitted to give their dull minds some idea of the truths he was about to teach them. The central and most conspicuous represented the Crucifixion; streams of blood ran from the five wounds and were collected in a precious vase by a priest who was about to baptize therefrom a negro who awaited that grace upon his knees in an attitude of deep devotion. Cardinals and kings in stately robes assisted at the ceremony. On one side of this group were shewn, all shining in light, the negroes who had received baptism, on the other, hideous and deformed, those who had rejected it.

Before beginning his Catechism he took each negro separately to examine whether he had been baptized. This he was obliged to do quite privately, because he found by experience that if they could hear one another's answers they would follow like sheep and all give the same reply. The result of this examination was to divide the negroes into three classes: those who had been baptized, those who had not, and those whose baptism was doubtful; he distinguished them by medals which he put around their neck.

He then commenced the instruction. The negroes were ranged around, seated on benches he had himself provided for them. Father Claver taking his cross in his hands would kneel down in their midst, and prayed there silently for some minutes, his face lighted up with heavenly fire. Then raising his right hand he made very solemnly a large sign of the cross, saying at the same time the usual words. This action and the words he repeated several times, and then with his interpreters he went in turn to every negro, making everyone sign himself in the same way with the holy sign. He would give sweetmeats as a reward to those who did it well, and gently find fault with the others; nor would he ever pass on to another until the last had by frequent repetition learnt his lesson perfectly. From this beginning he led them on to acts of faith which in their turn gave rise to acts of hope, and these to acts of charity and contrition. His own example acted in a marvellous way upon their untaught minds, and they caught the reflection of his ardent faith and burning charity. He took advantage of these dispositions to rouse in them a hatred of idolatry and desire for baptism. "See, my children," he would say, "you must do like the serpent who shakes off his old skin that he may have another and far more beautiful one:" and to make his meaning clearer he would take between finger and thumb the skin of his hand as if he were going to tear it off. The poor slaves whose attention was completely rivetted upon him, and who followed his minutest action, would then make use of the same signs to show they understood, and were ready to strip off their old idolatry.

But the deepest impression was made when, crucifix in hand, he spoke to them of the great love of the God who thus died for them. His words were accompanied by such floods of tears of love and sorrow, that seeing them the negroes broke forth into sobs and lamentations and even cries of grief. He concluded always with an act of contrition usually in these words: "My Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of God, You are my Father, my Mother and all my good. I love You with all my heart and am

very sorry for having offended You; I love You dearly, dearly." Tears drowned his voice in saying these words; the negroes wept with him, and thus ended the instruction for that day.

Shortly after, when other instructions of the same nature had prepared them sufficiently, a day was appointed for their baptism, and all possible solemnity was given to the ceremony. The number of baptisms thus administered cannot be known with certainty, but it probably exceeded four hundred thousand. It was a work always to be renewed, as relays of negroes succeeded one another without intermission during the forty years of Peter Claver's ministry.

The good father was not satisfied with making Christians of the negroes; he would have them good Christians, and to effect this he followed them into all the detail of their lives. It was remarked of him that he seemed to be everywhere at once, if not miraculously, at least by the incredible speed and fervour with which he went from one part of the city to the other, to visit the sick or instruct the ignorant. No one could keep up with him, and he was obliged to change his companion two or three times in the course of an afternoon. The climate of Cartagena is a cause of great suffering to its inhabitants, but scorching sun, drenching rain and biting wind never had the power to deter Peter Claver from a single charitable visit. Night as well as day was devoted to this ministry. "The other Fathers," he would say, "work hard and need their rest. I who do nothing have no need of sleep;" and so when the bell for a sick call rang at night, for his nights were passed in prayer, he was always the first to answer it and obtain the task he coveted.

Negroes, even when in health, are repulsive on account of their natural odour and uncivilized habits, but when in illness they become intolerable. The acts of charity which Peter Claver performed for them are such that we can scarcely bear to bring them home to ourselves. Weak hearts sicken even at hearing of what the heroic self-conquest of this true lover of the cross performed for

these poor outcast children of our common Father. No wonder that his charity was rewarded by the gift of miracles, and that at his prayer souls that had already left the body should return until they had received baptism or absolution, and their salvation was thus ensured. Three miracles of this kind are witnessed to, and innumerable cures were granted to his prayers. That we may learn how Peter Claver taught himself to overcome the natural loathing for what is nauseous, as strong in him as in other men, let us take courage and follow him to one abode of misery from which we may fancy what the rest were like. He was once called to the house of a rich trader to confess a negro who was covered all over with sores; the stench that they exhaled was so fetid that the sufferer was placed apart in an out-house. His very appearance was so horrible that no one dared to approach him, and strange to say, even Peter Claver, when he saw him, was seized with a repugnance that made him recoil with horror. The Father was followed, unknown to himself, by the master of the house, curious to witness the charity of which he had often heard. He saw the recoil of nature, but he saw also how it was met. Peter Claver withdrew a little, and gave himself a severe discipline. "Is this the way," he said to himself, "that you refuse to touch a brother redeemed by the Precious Blood; but you shall pay for it and learn charity." Then he came back, and approaching the sick man upon his knees, devoutly and most tenderly kissed the loathsome sores and cleansed them with his tongue; he gave refreshments to the sufferer, heard his confession, remained a long time by his side, and left him full of consolation. When he came out, his face was very calm, and a grave and sweet serenity was remarked by all.

Sometimes when, with the sick, he required the assistance of others, and the foul atmosphere prevented them from being able to approach it, they found it changed into a sweet and refreshing air when no natural means could have effected the improvement. His cloak, which he used often to spread beneath the leprous and revolting sick, far from contracting any unpleasant smell was

fragrant with a perfume of sweet flowers. It was quite a common thing with him to apply his lips to and to lick the most infected sores. He saw Jesus Christ in all His suffering members, and treated Him in them with the tenderness he would have bestowed on the wounds of his Master.

His eyes were always on the negroes and their conduct; and his presence and even the mere mention of his name were a restraint to keep them within bounds. If their dances, which he allowed as long as they were not indecent, exceeded the limits of propriety, he was no longer the loving Father but the avenger of God's law, and holding on high in one hand a crucifix, in the other a discipline, he would rain down a shower of blows on the dancers and musicians, who were glad to escape from them even with the loss of their instruments. These he took possession of, and restored them only after an alms had been given to the poor of the hospital. He was always the strict guardian of their morals, and saw to their observance of the laws of God and of the Church.

It was not the negroes of Cartagena alone who were the objects of his care. Every year he undertook most laborious missions into the surrounding country, travelling with a negro interpreter whom he obeyed as his superior, deferring to him on all points and leaving to him the ordering of the journey. He baptized, heard confessions, preached from morning till night, travelling across desert wastes of country from one settlement to the other, until he returned to Cartagena worn to a skeleton from excessive toil, but only anxious to resume the labours he had been forced to abandon for a time in the city itself. Here, the poor in the hospitals, and especially the lepers, the prisoners, the soldiers, the merchants, all classes in short were in turn the objects of his zeal, for he was the apostle not only of the negroes but of all Cartagena. He made himself the peacemaker between enemies, he converted heretics; in short wherever God's work was to be done at the cost of sacrifice, Peter Claver was there to do it with an energy, love, devotedness that won over the most obdurate by the

sweet persuasive force of sanctity. No day passed without the exercise of some heroic act of charity.

III. THE REWARD.

Let us turn from the streets and squares, from the busy money-loving crowd, from the misery, the cupidity and the worldliness of Cartagena, to follow its Apostle into his cell in the Jesuits' College of that city, to study for a little while his life as a religious and his life with God, thus tracing to its source all the charity and self-sacrifice we have been witnessing.

The College of Cartagena was poor, both in the means of subsistence and the number of its Fathers; but whilst existence there was a struggle that entailed unnumbered hardships upon its members, it was a school in which they were formed to no common measure of holiness. Peter Claver was at one time Minister in the College, that is, the second in command, and his duty therefore was to supply all the material wants of his brethren. At another time he had the charge of the formation of the lay-brother novices. Whatever his employment, he was always the servant of all; and as for so long a time each day he required the presence of a companion and the lay-brothers were very few and very busy, he always made time for the one assigned him as companion, by doing a part of his work. Thus he was sometimes in the sacristy, at others in the kitchen or the lodge, but whatever the office he would always respectfully take off his hat before the brother in charge, and beg him to tell him what to do.

His cell was for a long time a mere closet, too dark to allow him to see to write in it. His bed was always the hide of an ox or a common mat, his pillow a block of wood. But poor as this bed was he left it usually to sleep upon the bare floor. He would sometimes for months together have in his room one of his negro interpreters, who was ill with a disease that made it almost intolerable to be near him, and Father Claver would nurse him there with the tenderness of a mother.

Let us follow him into his cell when, after the almost superhuman toil of the day, he is at length alone. We shall see him take out a crown of very sharp thorns and place it on his head, for this is his usual practice when alone. He always says his Office thus when in his room. The night is not for him a time of sleep but of prayer and penance, and the sleep he took was but of two or three hours.

He was often absorbed the whole night long in contemplation so as to be unconscious even of the violent thunderstorms prevalent in that climate. His neighbour, Brother Gonzalez, under the influence of fear, would sometimes rush into Father Claver's room when the storm was very violent and go close up to him for protection without distracting him for an instant from his intercourse with God. The rector used to make his confession to Father Claver, and for this purpose would occasionally go to his room at night. Opening the door gently he often found him with his crown of thorns upon his head, a rope around his neck, and so absorbed in God that not to interrupt his prayer he would withdraw unobserved. He used to say he did not know when Father Claver's prayers were over, for at whatever hour he came to him he always found him so engaged.

Every Friday St. Peter Claver would leave his room in the dead of night with the crown of thorns upon his head, the rope around his neck, and a heavy cross upon his shoulders, and thus clothed in the likeness of Jesus Christ he made a penitential pilgrimage throughout the house. He took the discipline every night three times to blood, once before he went to sleep, again at midnight and a third time when the signal was given for the community to rise. The rough hair shirt he always wore was the only dressing he ever applied to those self-inflicted wounds.

Three times it happened that the door being opened in the middle of the night, Father Claver was thus seen raised some height above the ground in the same attitude in which he had been kneeling in prayer; his eyes were fixed with intense love upon the crucifix he

held in his hands, and he was surrounded by a soft, yet brilliant light. He remained for some hours in this position and then gently descended to the floor. The same unearthly radiance was often seen around his head when he was saying Mass, when visiting the hospitals, and when he was assisting criminals at their execution. It was so brilliant that no one could look on it without being dazzled.

The Passion of our Lord was the strongest attraction of his soul, and he tried, as far as possible, that in imitation of his Lord no part of his body should be without suffering. To attain this, besides the austerities already spoken of he bound his limbs about with horse-hair cords studded with iron points, and these he always wore. But if his penances were fearful the mortification of his senses was no less astonishing. During the fifty years he spent in religion he never allowed his eyes a single glance which was prompted by mere curiosity. The window of a cell he occupied for many years looked out upon the port, but he never opened it, nor looked out at what passed beneath. He never indulged himself with the fragrance of a flower and never tasted fruit. The guard he obtained over his senses was so great that he never made a movement to drive away mosquitoes or other stinging insects, but rather invited their approach. In his confessional they swarmed about him so that he was sometimes covered with blood from their stings. He would only laughingly say, if any one made a remark about it, that they were very useful, as they bled him without need of a lancet. He used similar devices to throw a veil over all his virtues.

Before the first Mass, often at three o'clock in the morning, Claver was already in his confessional, which he had chosen as the most inconvenient one in the Church, close to the door and exposed all day to sun or rain. He often remained in it so many hours that when the College gates were closed at night he had to be carried almost fainting with exhaustion to his room. The negroes came to him in crowds, and whilst there were any of them to confess no one else had a chance of being heard. All the early hours

of the morning he passed in his confessional, for it was his custom always to say the latest Mass.

He prepared for celebrating the Holy Sacrifice by first making his confession, which he did shedding abundant tears of sorrow; then whatever his occupations might be he spent a full half hour in prayer, and he never spoke to any one from that time till he had finished his thanksgiving. His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, always most remarkable, was especially shown whilst he was saying Mass, when his whole appearance was so expressive of the fervour of his soul that all who assisted at it were penetrated with a like feeling.

Whenever he could, Saint Peter Claver's great happiness was to take his meals with the beggars at the door. He would eat with them gladly out of the same dish and when the meal was over would collect and wash the plates and cups, sweep up the crumbs, in fact make himself the slave of the poor as he was the slave of negroes. He never ate more at dinner than the amount those who fast take for their collation; scraps of bread collected from the tables, with a potato, were his ordinary food. One evening whilst he was Minister of the house, entering the refectory for supper, he asked the cook to give him the contents of an earthen vessel containing some broth made of olives. It was brought to him and having thrown in a morsel of bread he thanked the brother saying it was excellent. The following evening he made the same request, and after this the cook's curiosity was excited, as it was so unusual for Father Claver to ask for or to praise his food. So he tasted the decoction and was immediately seized with violent pains and sickness. He looked into the vessel and there he found the bodies of large spiders and other insects in a state of decomposition, and so he immediately threw away the remainder. The third evening the Father again enquired for his favourite dish, and when he heard its fate: "God's will be done," he said, "but there was no need to throw it away, for it was very good."

The time of the siesta, or afternoon rest, so needed in hot climates, he employed in teaching catechism to his

interpreters and catechists, and his patience with these men was not one of the least marvellous of his virtues. During recreation time, when with the Community, he was always engaged in making rosaries for the negroes. His devotion to our Blessed Lady was only second to that which he felt for Her Divine Son, and he spared no pains and no opportunity to inculcate it upon all, especially upon children, whom he loved to train up in tender devotion to Her whom he used most frequently to speak of as "Mother of fair love."

Two maxims which he had learnt from Blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez were deeply engraved upon his heart, and firmly and consistently did he practise them. They were discovered amongst his writings after his death in these words:

First maxim. "When I am persecuted or calumniated I have either deserved it or not. If I have, why do I complain? ought I not rather to correct my fault and seek pardon from God? If I have not deserved it, I should rejoice at it, and be grateful to God for this opportunity of suffering something for His love, and for the rest I must be silent."

Second maxim. "When crosses or opposition come why do I not imitate the ass? When he is ill-treated he is silent; when he is neglected, over-laden, starved, despised, he is still silent. Whatever is said of it, whatever is done to it, it is still silent and makes no complaint. So likewise should a true servant of God act and say with David: 'I am become like a beast of burden before Thee.'"

It seemed indeed to be the one aim of Peter Claver's life to try how low and despicable he could make himself appear before men. We will give one example to show how far his humility was carried when it was a question of taking correction. During Holy Week he saw in the Jesuits' Church a lady whose dress befitted neither the season of penance nor the House of God, and was quite unbecoming a Christian woman. His zeal was enkindled, and he reproached her with the style of her dress and suggested that

it was unsuited to the time, her condition and her age. This last remark was more than she could stand, and she flew into a passion and gave way to such angry words that she attracted the attention of the sacristan, who began to take her part and blame the Father's indiscretion. A moment afterwards the Rector came up and either because he could not otherwise appease the lady's anger, or because he really thought that Father Claver was in the wrong, reprimanded severely his imprudence and his allowing himself to be carried away by the impetuosity of his zeal. Without one word to justify himself Father Claver knelt down before his Superior. He kissed his feet, asked pardon for the scandal which he had given, and begged that a penance proportioned to the fault might be imposed upon him. The lady was so surprised and so confused at what had occurred through her conduct that she made a complete change in her way of life, and was henceforward as edifying as she had been the contrary.

Father Claver was in this, as in all other occasions, a living model of his own maxim on humility: "The man who is truly humble desires contempt, and without seeking to appear humble he tries to appear to deserve to be humbled."

But what was the reward that His Lord and Master bestowed upon His faithful follower? It was one that this true lover of the cross would have chosen out of all others, the only one indeed that he deemed deserving of the name; the privilege of pressing closer to His Saviour crucified, of feeling more the pain He bore for us, of sharing more abundantly in His ignominies, His abandonment, His shame. It would be difficult to imagine a trial that would cut the Apostle of the Negroes more keenly to the heart than that of being forbidden to open for them by baptism the path of salvation, yet when a storm was raised against the Jesuits in Cartagena by their enemies, all its violence fell upon Peter Claver, and he was accused of re-baptizing those who had already received the sacrament. The accusation was quite unjustifiable, but the Visitor-General of the Society of Jesus forbade him in future to baptize,

and the saint thought it better to submit in silence than to protest his innocence. He never asked to baptize until the order was withdrawn. There was a time when every one, even his superiors, seemed against him. Not only did his own children, the negroes, abuse his patience, but their masters encouraged them to treat him with insult, alleging that he made them lose their time. Although many of his religious brethren had the greatest veneration for his holiness, some of them were allowed to be blind to his merit and not only made complaints of the additional labour caused by his zeal and charity, but made him responsible for any ignorance or mistakes on the part of negroes instructed by him. They bitterly reproached him and drew on him reprimands so public and so severe that it required a patience like his own to bear them meekly. Once a Provincial, who was much irritated at hearing a young slave spoken of as "Father Claver's negro," expressed his displeasure with much warmth and even bitterness. But the Father listened without making any reply, although he had no other connexion with the pretended fault than that of having got the situation for the little negro in the house. Another superior, who was prejudiced against him, expressed contempt for his opinion, saying he was ignorant and did not even understand Latin. Untrue as the taunt was he made no answer but to acknowledge his ignorance. "What does it matter," he said to some who were surprised at his serenity, "whether one is thought learned or ignorant. But it is very necessary to be humble and obedient." The last four years of his life were passed in almost total solitude and inaction. In 1650, when he was seventy years old, having until that age laboured with unremitting ardour, he was attacked by a very severe illness, and although he recovered he never regained his strength. From that time he was confined almost entirely to his room, and for many months before the end could neither feed himself nor even rise from his bed. Although unable to say Mass from the palsy that shook his frame he still made his confession daily and dragged himself or was carried to the Church to hear

Mass and receive Communion, and as long as it was possible he continued to hear Confessions.

As his weakness increased his patience was more and more exercised. The plague had ravaged Cartagena and many Jesuits had succumbed to it; those who survived were overburdened with work and were quite unable to give Father Claver the attention they would have desired. He was confided to the care of some clumsy negroes, especially of a rough and awkward boy whose attendance caused him every kind of suffering and made his life a martyrdom. Sometimes the servant neglected to bring him either food or drink for days together. His room was left unswept for weeks and so as to become uninhabitable, and to this negative unkindness was added the positive barbarity of blows and savage treatment. Yet Father Claver never complained; no shade came over the calm tranquillity of his expression. "My sins," he used to say, "deserve infinitely more." Still his tender conscience reproached him with feelings that human nature must needs experience, though no expression of them was ever allowed. "My impatience during my illness," he once said, "has robbed me of whatever merit I had gained." Sometimes he would express his sorrow that the boy would not help him to rise when he wanted to go to Mass or to visit the Blessed Sacrament. The efforts he made to do so unassisted caused him many a fall. The noise was overheard by the Brother in the sacristy below, and brought him to his aid. But finding that this Brother in helping him to dress treated him too respectfully and considerately, he would dismiss him with many thanks and call for the negro, whose rough usage was far more to his mind.

Two great consolations came to lighten the burden of these painful years of weary helplessness. One was the arrival of Father de Fariña, who was sent by the King of Spain to succeed him in the work of baptizing the negroes. "What!" he cried, "come to baptize the negroes! that is good news," and his face beamed with joy, as he struck his stick upon the floor. He rose at once and dragged himself to the room the Father occupied, knelt before him

and kissed his feet, congratulating him on his employment. When Father de Fariña learnt that the holy old man before him was no other than Father Claver, he felt their places should be reversed; and he in turn fell at the feet of the servant of God protesting that he should always look upon him as his master.

The other consolation was the printed life of Saint Alphonus Rodriguez which reached him eight months before his death and was a great delight to him, recalling as it did so many memories of his holy master, and ensuring that the veneration he himself felt for the saintly lay-brother would be widely propagated.

An order arrived from Spain to pull down the Jesuit College, but Father Claver received a distinct knowledge from God, that before this happened, he himself should be safe in the eternal home not made with hands. The demolition was to begin at once and there seemed no immediate prospect of Father Claver's death. Yet he spoke of it as near at hand, and begged that he might be buried "by his confessional near the church door and at the feet of his dear negroes," a request which, however, was not granted. On Sunday, Sept. 6th, 1654, he was assisted for the last time to the church, by two negroes, and after Communion returned in the same way to his room. As he passed the sacristy he said to the Brother: "I am going to die, do you want anything for the next life?" "That your reverence may recommend me with this house and city to God," was the reply. Father Claver passed the remainder of the day in close converse with God, and towards evening was attacked by a violent fever that seemed to be rather the effect of his very ardent love acting on his weakened constitution than a natural malady. During the night unconsciousness came on, and the Sacrament of Extreme Unction was administered early the next morning, but the holy Father never spoke again and gave no sign of consciousness. His blessed soul, thus purified by suffering, passed to its eternal and most glorious reward on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

Strange to say, no sooner was he dead than a fever

of enthusiasm seized upon the city to do honour and to reverence as a saint the man who during his long sickness had lain abandoned by nearly all. The college was literally besieged by crowds who came to venerate his remains, and through the streets the children went crying loudly, "the Saint is dead, the Saint is dead." Above all his own negroes came from all quarters of the city and its neighbourhood to testify their love and gratitude, and the authorities outdid each other in public and substantial expressions of esteem. Honour was in truth his due, for he was a conqueror indeed. He gained innumerable souls for God and heaven, and he was a victor in that hardest and most obstinate of fights, the struggle against self-love, self-interest and self-will. No wonder that when a palm branch was placed upon his body after death, the dead stiff fingers should unclose, as they were seen to do, and grasp a symbol to which he had so true a right.

There was no controlling the crowds who thronged into the Jesuits' Church from the time the holy body was laid out there. All day they surged to and fro in the endeavour to approach near the remains and kiss the hands and feet that had worked so many miracles of love. But towards evening, when the negroes and the poorer classes freed from their work came to add to the crowd, and insisted upon looking once again upon the father they had lost, the Jesuits unclasped the hands, and removing the palm branch and the chalice, extended the arms in the form of a cross that the hands might the more easily be reached.

As night approached and the crowd continued to increase, the city guard was sent to defend the body, and the Augustinians replaced the Jesuits who were worn out with their struggle against the people. An effort to cover the body with a pall was entirely frustrated by the crowd, and when on the following morning the moment came for removing it to the tomb prepared in the wall of the Church, it was necessary to employ the device of distributing relics of the saint at the Church door, to make it possible for the removal to be accomplished.

Three magnificent funeral services, with panegyrics, were celebrated with all possible pomp; the last of these was peculiarly touching as it was a spontaneous expression of the gratitude of the negroes. They assisted at it most solemnly, arranged according to their different nationalities, and spared nothing that could add to its pomp.

Multitudes of miraculous cures attested the sanctity of the servant of God, but space allows only one or two to be mentioned here. St. Peter's spiritual daughter Doña Isabella de Betancour was suffering from a disease of the eyes that prevented her, in spite of her great wish to see the saint once more, from venturing out the day following his death. Her mother, however, full of faith in his powerful intercession, persuaded her to go. Doña Isabella touched her eyes with his holy hand and the ophthalmia was instantly cured.

Bartholomew Sanchez was lying sick unto death at the hospital of St. Sebastian. His brother who was nursing him, through great veneration for St. Peter Claver, left the hospital to assist at the funeral. On his return he gave Bartholomew a little sprig of rosemary which he had taken from the bier, telling him to recommend himself to Father Claver who was able to cure him at once. Bartholomew, full of faith, put the rosemary to his mouth, and when his brother, alarmed at seeing him about to eat it, exclaimed against his imprudence, he replied: "It comes from a saint; it cannot hurt me." When he had eaten it, he said it tasted very sweet and not at all like rosemary. Then he fell asleep and awoke quite well. The miracles continued in such constant succession and Father Claver's reputation for sanctity was so universal, that three years after his death juridical informations were taken for his canonization. They continued for three years during which the facts related in his life were deposed to on oath by witnesses worthy of credit. These informations were then sent to Rome, and in 1747, Benedict XIV. decreed the heroic character of the virtues of the servant of God, and declared him venerable.

The beatification of our saint was the first which was celebrated in the pontificate of Pius IX. It took place

with all possible solemnity and splendour on Sept. 21st, 1851. His canonization was reserved to add to the lustre of the Jubilee of our Holy Father, Leo XIII

In conclusion, one word may be added about the tomb of the saint. His body at its burial was placed in a coffin of cedar wood in a niche made in the wall of one of the chapels in the Jesuits' church of Cartagena. This niche was opened in 1657, when the body which had been laid in quicklime was found, with the exception of a portion of the head which was somewhat injured, entire and without the least mark of corruption, although the coffin, the clothes and even the ironwork were completely decayed. The remains were then placed in a new shrine and transferred to a more honourable position in the same chapel.

When the College was no longer occupied by the Jesuits, after their expulsion, it was turned into a hospital. Now in our own days the Fathers are returning to the Republic of Colombia. Last year, 1887, on arriving at Cartagena, they found that the Church of St. Peter Claver was completely abandoned. Yet the negroes were still faithful to the memory of their apostle, for a negress had the charge of it, burning before his tomb a little lamp the oil of which was supplied by subscriptions from the negroes. These good souls, the descendants of those whom St. Peter Claver had evangelized, are still very devout to him. They maintain that he was of the same colour as themselves and pay great veneration to a picture that represents him as the true type of a negro. The church in which his remains repose is about to be restored, and his relics rescued from their long neglect.

May the Apostle of the Negroes obtain for all who labour for souls in the newly-opened continent of Africa, or in the countries of America, the grace to carry on his work for the salvation of the negro, with some share of his spirit of zeal and self-devotion!

St. Alphonsus Rodriguez,

Of the Society of Jesus.

THE HOLY LAY-BROTHER.

(1531—1617.)

BY THE REV. FRANCIS GOLDIE,

OF THE SAME SOCIETY.

I. Life in the World.

THESE are days of equality, when every man claims to be as good as his neighbour, and possibly a great deal better. Democracy disapproves of class privileges and class distinctions. Feudal—old-world—notions about society are quite at a discount. But with all this there has never been an age when, even in young countries, like the great Republic across the Atlantic, social inequalities were so great, when the rich were so rich and the poor were so poor. So too, never has there been a time since Christianity took the place of Paganism, when the poor chafed so much under their lot, and the rich made such a display of their wealth. In New York as in London, the man who has amassed the largest fortune is the man most envied and most thought of, and if in both cities much public spirit, much philanthropy is shown, still immense sums are expended in mere sumptuous living and pretentious luxury. No wonder that any theories levelled at riches find a ready hearing with the starved and the envious, or that schemes the most untried and the most impracticable are preached with an appearance of truth, as sure ways to bring within the reach of all the plenty which is in the possession of the few. Such things have been before, and will be to the end; and the unequal distribution of the good things in this world

will always be a puzzle to the social economist, and a spiritual stumbling-block to many. But the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in proportion as it is believed and realized and brought into daily life, can give a real solution to the riddle, can keep the rich from an abuse of their riches, and the poor from discontent with their poverty. Catholicity, when not merely professed, but thoroughly practised, as we still find it in some Catholic countries, or as it was in days gone by before the revolt of the sixteenth century, gives true equality, while always recognizing the natural and necessary distinctions between man and man; and makes of one heart and one mind the rich and the poor, the governing and the governed.

So to-day the Church has just glorified a poor, humble old lay-brother, who in out-of-the-way Majorca, for thirty years or more kept the gate of a provincial college. And as this humble position and this servitude were freely embraced, all the more does it point the lesson of the Church's honours. "He hath exalted the humble, and the rich He hath sent empty away," were the inspired words of the poor Maiden of Nazareth, which declare that God glorifies for ever those who walk in the footsteps of His Incarnate Son; but to those who make their heaven here on earth He says, "Amen, you have had your reward." What truer way to redress the apparently unjust balances of life?

Segovia was a busy place, a Leeds without its smoke, in the early part of the bustling sixteenth century. With a great historical past, the beautiful old city in the heart of Spain was then noisy with the looms of the cloth-weavers, and with the cries of the shepherds who drove in their flocks of sheep from the blue hills around. It was more than this. Before Philip II. made Madrid, it was one of the capitals of Spain. Diego Rodriguez, an honest cloth-merchant of the city, was blessed with a large family, some eleven children, of whom the second boy, Alonso, or, as we call him, Alphonsus, is the subject of our story. Alphonsus was born on the 25th of July,

1531, St. James' Day. Diego was noted for the holiness of his household. The frequent Communions of his family—so unusual in the days before the Council of Trent—gave them a reputation for piety among the townsfolk; and when in 1539 Blessed Peter Favre, with another Father of the new Society of Jesus, came to preach a mission to Segovia, they gratefully accepted the hospitality of Diego. After their fruitful work was done, he offered them a country house of his own—for Jesuit houses were then few and far between—wherein to rest from their labours by making their annual retreat. Diego sent Alphonsus with the Fathers to wait upon them, and they in return taught the little boy to serve Mass, to say his beads, and prepared him for his first confession. Though he was then but about nine years old, they found him not only of a charming disposition and anxious to learn, but an apt and clever scholar.

1544. As soon as Diego heard of the wonderful reform that a religious of the new Society, the humble Francis de Villanueva, was effecting in the great university of Alcalá, he sent his two boys to study under his care. But before the scholastic year has passed their father died, and the young Alphonsus was recalled home, and though not fifteen had to go into his late father's business. He had not got to the highest class, called rhetoric—had not, in a word, finished his classical education. It was not, however, till he was twenty-three that his mother retired from the business.

1557. Spite of Alphonsus' integrity and high principle, his affairs began to go wrong. The foreign wars of Charles V., the easily-got gold of America, and still more, an utterly false system of financial legislation, were ruining the wool trade, and in fact all the manufactures of Spain. When Alphonsus was twenty-seven, he was induced to take to wife a girl, well born and pious, from the hill country near Segovia, whose dowry it was hoped would save ruin from the family business. But things only grew worse. Diego, the eldest brother, who had remained at

Alcalá and there completed his studies, had obtained the degree of LL.D., taken to the law, and settled at Seville, died in the flower of his youth just as his family conceived high hopes of him, leaving behind him a widow. Then Alphonsus lost a sweet little daughter, and after a long illness, which was to him a cause of very great expense, his young wife died, and his only consolation in this world was the sole surviving child, a boy.

1559. Two years after his marriage the Jesuit Fathers, at the earnest request of priests and people, had established themselves permanently at Segovia. A gentleman of Segovia, who had been a friend of St. Ignatius of Loyola when at Rome, welcomed the religious of the Order to his native city. The first comers were Father Christopher Rodriguez, the future Nuncio to Abyssinia and Chaplain-General at the Battle of Lepanto, and Father Louis Santander, whose preaching was a source of a complete renewal of religious life in the city. Father Louis was appointed the first Rector of the college, and when St. Teresa came to Segovia to found there one of her houses, he was both her counsellor and her confessor. Naturally enough, the Rodriguez family had been among the earliest to put themselves under the spiritual care of the Fathers of the Society, and our Saint—whose domestic troubles had shown him the vanity of the world, though his life had always been a pious one—gave himself up, under their direction, entirely to prayer and to penance. He realized what still remained of his goods, and he retired with his child into a part of the house, his first home; of which another portion was occupied by his mother and by two of his sisters whose holiness merited for them the name of "the blessed." Seen in the clear light of his new grace, Alphonsus looked on his past life as utterly misspent, and condemned himself for not having heeded God and his own salvation.

1562. He made a general confession of his whole life to Father Baptist Martinez, S.J., and from the feast of Our Lady of the Snow, the 5th of August,

he began to go regularly every week to the sacraments, a very rare practice in those days. He kept every Friday and Saturday as a strict fast, scourged himself continually, and wore a hair-shirt, which covered him from his shoulders to his knees. This period of penance and profound contrition lasted for three long years. But God as usual came to comfort the soul which sought Him so earnestly. Alphonsus recited the whole Rosary every day on his knees. As he said his Our Father a beautiful crimson rose used to appear before him, and at each Hail Mary a white rose, all of wondrous beauty and fragrance, and when his sisters learnt this favour from him, they taught him how to meditate upon the various mysteries. Morning and evening he gave two hours to this pious practice, and spent an extra quarter of an hour in thanksgiving. He then heard Mass with deep devotion. Later on he passed from vocal prayer to regular meditation, and without ceasing to say his Rosary, gave four hours to strictly mental prayer. The great truths, Death, Hell, Judgment, were for his first years the constant subject of his thoughts. He then passed on to the contemplation of the life and sufferings of our Lord. In reward for his diligence in prayer, it was vouchsafed to him to drink of the chalice of the Lord's Passion, by sharing in a marvellous but most real manner in the mental and physical agonies of his crucified Lord, while he was meditating upon them.

1563. But on the morning of the feast of the Assumption, when in the Jesuit church preparing with all care for Holy Communion, Alphonsus was rapt into the third heavens, and the glories of God's heavenly court, with which he was to become so familiar, were for the first time made manifest to him. He saw his God seated on a throne surrounded by countless glorious spirits, and crowned with a diadem of untold glory; while our Blessed Lady, with his guardian angel and his patron saint, St. Francis of Assisi, led him to the feet of his Lord, to lay his

offering before his Divine Master. When he came to himself, he was so dazed with what he had seen, that he could hardly find his way out of the church. So impressed was he with these realities of the other world, that he preferred, like the sainted Queen Blanche, to see his own dear boy, whom he loved so deeply, die while yet innocent, rather than live to offend God. This wish found its expression in an ardent prayer, which received a speedy answer; for, a month after this, the little child went to Heaven. Thus the last link which bound him to the world was broken. Already Alphonsus, after the vision of Assumption Day, had made up his mind that he would ultimately become a religious. One night, whether in a dream or in imagination, he saw a dense flight of birds, black and hideous, which darkened the whole sky, until a beautiful white dove, with the Holy Name written in silver on its breast, appeared in their midst. Three times they attacked it, and three times it struck them down. They fell like hail before its power, and the survivors at last flew away. Father Martinez, convinced that it was a sign from God, begged long and earnestly in prayer for light to unriddle its meaning, and was at length convinced that it signified that his penitent was to be assailed by the foulest attacks of the devil, but that under the shield of the Society he was to come off victorious. It was, however, all in vain that St. Alphonsus sought admission from the Fathers at Segovia. His health seemed so utterly broken down by his excessive austerities as to make him useless as a lay-brother, while his education was too defective for one of his age to be received as a scholastic —as destined for Holy Orders. In one so convinced as was our Saint that he was called by God, no small difficulty could stay him. So he parted with all his fortune and divided his substance between his two sisters—his mother was then dead—only just keeping enough to help him on his long journey, and he left his country and kinsfolk to try if his old friend, Father Santander, who had been made Rector of the

Jesuit College at Valencia, would consent to receive him.

1569. It was not the beauty of the garden of Spain that attracted the pilgrim to that bright and flower-girt city, but only the one wish to place his neck under the straight but sweet yoke of his Lord and Love. Father Santander, who knew his worth, encouraged him in this holy desire, but advised him to get ordained priest as soon as possible, so as to obtain the more easily admission into the Society. Alphonsus accordingly took a situation in the house of a noble lady as companion to her little son, whom he had to look after and to accompany to school. There, in spite of the jeers of the boys of his class, this man of nearly forty set himself, as St. Ignatius had done before him, to begin the elements of Latin grammar. But among the students he met with a man of his own age, seemingly of his own mind and given altogether to God. This new friend half persuaded Alphonsus to follow his strong inclination for a life of solitude and penance, to give up his cherished idea of entering the Society, and to go with him to spend his days as a hermit. Rodriguez went, in fact, during the holiday time to see him at San Matteo, a large village many miles off, which he had chosen for his place of retirement.

The conscience of Alphonsus, however, reproached him with his abandonment of God's call, and he returned hurriedly to Valencia and sought out Father Santander. His director showed him clearly the value of obedience and community life, and the peril he had run in following his own fancy. Rodriguez threw himself on his knees, exclaiming: "Never again will I do my own will for the rest of my life. I put myself in your Reverence's hands, to do what you like with me; you may settle whatever you please." St. Alphonsus, by the Father's advice, begged our Lady to make his way clear, and then full of conviction that his vocation was from God, sought and obtained from the Father Provincial Anthony Cordeses admission into the Society. The

official consultors had three several times, almost to a man, just as the Fathers of Segovia and on the same grounds opposed his reception, but the Provincial overruled their objection, and insisted that the Society must not shut its doors to a saint. He was, however, to enter as a lay-brother.

This was the free choice of Brother Alphonsus, whom God had called to be, with St. Felix of Cantalice and so many other saints, a patron and a model to those called to a like high and humble calling. A few more years of application to study would certainly have enabled him to receive the priesthood, and Father Cordeses evidently could promise that he would then have been received into the Society of Jesus as a priest. But guided by his humility and the desire promptly to follow, and at once, his vocation, he of his own accord accepted the station of a lay-brother—a life of humble hard work, which renounces the dignities and responsibilities of the priesthood, and all that seems great in the eyes of men, to follow our Lord closely in the hidden humility of the eighteen years. St. Alphonsus knew well the grandeur of labour, which the Carpenter of Nazareth has ennobled, which obedience exalts to the very highest of deeds, because it makes it the fulfilment of the mighty will of God, and which prayer transfigures into a likeness of the life of those blessed spirits, who, no matter what their errand on earth, stand ever and for ever before the Throne. As in the old law, the children of Israel who were detained in the rear to guard the baggage, shared by Divine law with the warriors of the van the spoils of the victory; so in the army of the Lord, under the banner of the Holy Name, those who work in order to leave others free to preach and to teach, share equally with them in the everlasting rewards.

When evening had closed in on the eventful day of his acceptance, some one knocked at the shutters of Alphonsus' room. He half opened them and there, with a face distorted with rage, stood the hermit of San Matteo, who poured out upon him a volley of

reproaches. Our Saint put the shutter to at once. He never again heard of his quondam friend, and the question naturally arises, Was not the whole but a stratagem of the devil? So thought St. Alphonsus, and after a night spent in prayer, he hurried off next morning, full of joy at his escape from the snare, to gain the goal of his most ardent desires, the Jesuit College of St. Paul.

II. Life in Religion.

1571. It was on January 31, a day to be remembered by him during his forty years of religious life, that St. Alphonsus was received as a novice. He went through the first part of his two years' probation either at Gandia, under the shadow of the castle of St. Francis Borgia, and in the college founded by that Saint, the first ever opened by the Society of Jesus, or, as some writers say, in the College at Valencia. He threw himself heart and soul into his new life, carrying out most faithfully his resolution to make a total sacrifice of his own will, and giving to work all the time not devoted to obligatory prayer and rest. He passed through the month's retreat, which forms such an important part of a Jesuit's training, and he came out of it so full of fervour that after only six months of his novitiate, in July or August of 1571, he was sent to the new college at Palma, the capital of the lovely island of Majorca. The house had only been opened some ten years before, and it had but a very small chapel, once a Jewish synagogue, attached to it, dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Sion, to which was added a school, but this fell into disuse when the University of Palma was founded in 1483. A new and large church had been begun the very year of our Saint's arrival. Plenty of hard work was found for Alphonsus as a novice in helping the workmen at the building. His first fixed duties were those of under-sacristan and companion to the Fathers on their errands of charity. The Jesuit College was when he arrived a mere makeshift of many houses thrown into one, but it

was by degrees enlarged, and at the same time the course of studies gradually grew from the first elements of grammar till it included the highest studies of philosophy and theology. It was not till April 5, 1573, two months beyond the usual duration of a Jesuit noviceship, that St. Alphonsus was permitted to take his vows. Probably his superiors still hesitated to receive him, as he did not seem to have the health or strength needed for his arduous duties.

One of the very first objects that catches the traveller's eye, as he enters the Bay of Palma, is the circular castle of Belver, and, on the side of the hill which it crowns, a white stone chapel, restored of late years. A pious lady was the castellan of this royal fortress in the time of St. Alphonsus, and shortly after his vows the Rector of the college, her confessor, took our holy Brother as his companion, when going to give to her the sacraments, as she was too old to come to church. The road was very steep, and though it was in February, the sun shone fiercely. With difficulty Rodriguez climbed the height, and the perspiration poured from his face. But he forgot his pains and fatigues in the contemplation of the mysteries of the Rosary. Just at the very hardest part of the road, our Lady appeared to him and gently wiped his brow with a cloth which she held in her blessed hands. Her tender charity filled Alphonsus with confusion, but so great was the joy that overflowed his heart, that he climbed the rest of the path with ease. The white chapel recalls this incident of his life.

In 1585, Alphonsus being then fifty-four, bound himself to God by his last vows, and these vows were so dear to him, that he used to repeat them every day during Holy Mass at the Elevation. Another holy Brother, the cook of the house, Brother Diego Ruiz, took his vows at the same time, the bosom friend and faithful imitator of our Saint. Diego never once asked for a day's holiday all the thirty years that he worked in the kitchen. He managed to hear every Mass said in the college

church, spite of his morning's work, for the tribune was so near the kitchen, that he could slip down as soon as the priest's Communion was over and get ready the simple breakfast for him, so as to return in time for the next Mass. St. Alphonsus assisted at his happy death in 1601, and began at once saying his beads, as ordered by rule, for the soul of his departed Brother, till our Lady showed to him Brother Diego safe by her side in Heaven.

St. Alphonsus had a like consolation as he knelt by the bed-side of Father Coch, the Rector, who had received him on his first coming to the island, and who died in July, 1587, in his third term of office. For at least six or seven minutes he saw the heavens open and an array of blessed spirits, waiting to escort his venerated Superior to his well earned reward.

After his vows, Rodriguez was made hall porter, a post demanding constant attention, considerable fatigue, and a large stock of patience; and this post he held till old age positively obliged him to have a helper, when he gradually gave up this employment for lighter work. At the college gate he was thrown across numbers of people of every class of life. Clergy coming to confession or to see the Fathers; boys and young men, lay and clerical, attending the college lectures; the poor who sought for alms; gentlemen and their wives, and Majorca teemed with Spanish hidalgoes both proud and rich; and townsfolk of all degrees. All of these came within the influence of the lay-brother's holiness, and his whole life was a real apostolate for souls. Even learned theologians and religious looked to him for counsel, and later on in life he formed to sanctity, among many others, the Apostle of the Negroes, St. Peter Claver,* and Father Jerome de Moranta, who was to give his life for Christ in Mexico. Numbers were drawn by the words and example of the holy porter to embrace religious life, so that there was hardly a vocation on the island at his time

* See his Life, issued in the C.T.S. series.

that was not owing in some way or other to his saintly influence.

St. Peter Claver owed to the exhortations and prayers of his friend not only much of his spiritual knowledge and marvellous holiness, but his vocation to the foreign missions, which made him what he became, the Xavier of South America. To St. Alphonsus he went, with the leave of his Superiors, as to a director of his conscience, and the humble old man dared not refuse a trust which God had by an interior voice charged him to accept. The privilege of meeting the sainted porter of Majorca caused the young religious to regard the order to go to the College of Majorca as a special grace; and during the three years he spent on the island in the study of philosophy, St. Peter went quickly forward, under so sure a guide, up the steep road of sanctity. To Rodriguez was shown in his prayer the glorious throne prepared for his pupil in the courts of Heaven, side by side with St. Francis Xavier; and to him were revealed the great things which his apt scholar was to do in the Indies.

When Claver left Majorca for Spain, he carried away as a precious treasure, and he kept during his long travels, a little MS. work on spiritual matters written by St. Alphonsus' own hand, the only keepsake which his rule allowed. In his last sickness one of his great consolations was to receive the small Spanish Life of his dear friend, the first ever printed, of which—the work is very rare—a copy is to be found in our British Museum.

By order of his superiors, St. Alphonsus composed, towards the close of his life, a too short memoir of the favours bestowed on him by God, and from that time twice a year he continued to give an account of his conscience in writing. Besides this he wrote several treatises on spiritual matters, which form three goodly volumes, full of great light in heavenly things.*

* Our Saint is not to be confounded with his well known namesake, Father Alphonsus Rodriguez, the author of *Christian Perfection*.

The witnesses to his canonization, who knew him in his post as porter and who testified to his holiness, are most numerous.

Whenever he was not called away by duty, he spent his time in praying fervently before a statue of our Lord tied to the pillar, or before a picture of our Lady, both of which were in the porter's lodge; nor was he distracted by the troops of college boys who came in and out. Or he would retire into a little inner room, and there kneel, often with outstretched arms, at the foot of a great wooden cross which stood there: or, again, his favourite spot was a little window or squint which looked out on the Blessed Sacrament, where formerly a door had led into the church. There, gazing on the Tabernacle, he loved to spend his leisure moments in half-ecstatic prayer. Oftentimes he was found with his eyes filled with tears, and a light streaming from his face. The figure of our Blessed Lord, which was said to have spoken to him, was long kept as a precious relic.

His life was, in fact, a constant circle of prayer and work, or rather one unbroken round of prayer and penance. He rose by permission, until too old to do so, two hours before the rest of the community, and he always thought it was his Angel Guardian who took care to awake him. At once he roused himself from sleep, and prayers of thanksgiving and love, resolutions of giving the day to God's service, started to his heart and to his lips, and with the sign of the Cross he began the *Te Deum*. He recited the words, "Grant us, O Lord, to keep us without sin," as if that day was to be his last. Then he said the Litany of our Lady.

Then followed his meditation, in which his soul at once flew up to God, as an arrow to its mark. When very old and ill, his superiors more than once bade him to give up the application of his mind to heavenly things for fear of tiring his head, but prayer was so natural to him that his effort to obey and refrain from it cost him more pain than relief. In fact, he grew more and more closely

united to God, till even sleep ceased to separate him from his Beloved. Nor did this union ever hinder him from doing his work, or from attending to acts of charity. Even when lost to outside things in his constant raptures, obedience always at once brought him to himself. When the door bell rang, it was to him the voice of God. "Here I am, Lord," was his quick reply, as he hurried to the gate; and he welcomed as God whoever came, however importunate, or rude, or inconsiderate they might be.

Some of the witnesses at the process or official examinations about his virtues, with a view to his canonization, held after his death, acknowledged that when they were boys and attending the college, they used, as lads will do, to amuse themselves by runaway rings, and then out of sight would watch the holy porter as he came to answer the door. They must have been ashamed of themselves, for they never saw a sign of annoyance in his face nor in his manner when he looked out of the gate.

Whenever he had to leave the house, Alphonsus had learnt from his Rector, Father Coch, always to make a visit first to the college church, where he begged his Sacramental Lord that he might die then and there rather than offend Him while outside. As he walked the streets of the gay and brilliant city, neither then nor elsewhere did he ever look a woman deliberately in the face.

It was, and perhaps is still, the custom at Majorca for the server to give some water to those who had just communicated, and as St. Alphonsus constantly served at the altar, he had to do this continually to those of the devout sex; but so strictly did he keep his bargain with his eyes that the ladies used to call him the "dead brother." Not content with closely examining his conscience twice a day, he never let an hour pass without calling it to an account. When he went to his meals, his mind was so filled with thoughts of God and His Blessed Mother, that he seemed to have lost any taste for food, and had often to be bidden by his superiors to eat. One day

a dish was sent in by mistake made of some kind of gourd utterly unfit for the table, and as nauseous as it was unwholesome, but love of penance made him attack his portion with a greediness quite unusual to him. The Father Minister, the second in command, had no sooner tasted it than he whispered to the Rector, "There is death in this dish," and the Superior, seeing how fast St. Alphonsus was devouring the nasty pottage, sent some one down to him at once to stop him. So, too, when some boiled eggs were brought him which had served as nest eggs, he took them without a word, though the smell from them sickened those at his side. So little usually did he eat, so carefully did he abstain from any dainty or delicacy, that his meals were like a perpetual fast.

At recreation, as at all other times, when charity compelled him to speak, he was never heard to utter an idle word, and if the conversation turned on subjects of a useless kind, he retired into himself and became so absorbed in God as to seem to fall asleep, but he woke up at once when his brothers began to talk of his favourite subjects, of God or holy things.

In addition to his other duties, Alphonsus had the care of the novice lay-brothers, and he daily read to them some spiritual reading for half an hour. His devotion when serving Mass was contagious, and he was eagerly sought for by the Fathers, as they always experienced special favours when he was by their side, and people used to flock to hear the Mass which he chanced to be serving. Several times a bright light shone out from his face as he knelt at the altar, as a token of the invisible graces which were his at that sacred time.

Out of the love of Jesus love of His Blessed Mother grew naturally and necessarily. This had been noted in him when even a child, and it only developed with a wondrous power when he was enrolled in the Society of Her Son. In all his needs he turned to Her with a certainty, which never deceived him, to gain whatever he wanted for himself or for others.

Besides his Rosary, his favourite devotion was the well known Little Office of the Immaculate Conception, of which he may almost be called the author. Copies of the Office were then very rare, and at the distinct wish of our Lady he loved to write it out, to get others to do so, and to give them away to all whom he thought able to recite it daily, a practice which he most strongly recommended. Our Blessed Lady approved so highly of his zeal and of this beautiful devotion, that the circular letter which announced his death made note of this, and the Office was at once printed in different cities of Europe. The favour bestowed on our Saint on Assumption Day at Segovia was only one of many like graces given to him on a feast doubly dear to a child of the Society, as at once the true birthday of its Queen, and of the Order itself, which had its beginning on that day in the vaults of Montmartre at Paris. Mary's Immaculate Conception was honoured in a special way by the good people of Majorca. Their great hero, the genius Raymund Lully, had years before defended it in a learned work; and a Bishop of our Saint's time had instituted most solemn festivities in its honour. When in a theological discussion its truth had been called in question, Alphonsus, always so meek and so reserved, seemed almost to lose all control of himself, as with a holy anger he argued in its favour. He declared very solemnly that one of the reasons why the Society had been called into being was to defend this mystery. He was never tired of commending to others a confidence in Her, whose love and power had never failed him. One of his favourite aspirations was, "Jesus and Mary, objects of my tenderest love, may I suffer and may I die for love of you!"

When past seventy, Alphonsus became so feeble that his superiors relieved him from his regular duties as porter. But he continued working at any work that he was able to do, as helping the porter on busy days, or sweeping the house, or working in the kitchen, till the very last years of his life. He

clung, as to a privilege, to his turn to clean the plates and dishes after meals. And even when unable to kneel, he obtained, as a great favour, leave to serve Mass standing, in a private chapel.

When his future biographer and his faithful disciple, Father Colin, was leaving Majorca to complete his divinity studies in Spain, he went to say good-bye to our Saint. It was a Saturday evening in 1616, and he found his old friend confined to his room and seated on his bed, but so absorbed in God that he was able to throw himself at his feet and reverently to kiss them without being observed by him. As his last advice before they parted for ever in this life, Brother Alphonsus said to the young religious, that if ever he wished to obtain anything from God, he should ask it confidently from our Lady. "Be very devout to Her, and be sure all will go well with you."

Such was the power of our Saint's prayers that at every emergency his religious brethren and people in the city had recourse to him. But when obedience added its authority to the dictates of charity, and he put forth all his strength, Heaven seemed to be unable to refuse his petitions. Wonderful were the cures wrought, extraordinary the conversions brought about, strange the change in hearts. The very elements seemed to obey him. One 8th of December, a terrible tornado swept over the city and the neighbourhood; hardly had St. Alphonsus at the bidding of his Superior said three Hail Marys, before all was calm and bright as before.

The poor man of Assisi, the seraphic St. Francis, had always a special place in our Saint's affection. His simplicity, his early life spent in business, his refusal out of humility of the priestly office, found a loving likeness in Alphonsus. To his father, St. Ignatius, he was naturally bound by the strongest ties, and when on one octave day of his feast the Rector bade him tell the praises of their great founder from the reading desk in the refectory, he amazed the community by his eloquent enthusiasm,

and by the deep insight he betrayed into the Saint's virtues. But there was no narrowness in his heart, and the founders of the various religious orders, St. Bruno, St. Dominic, all had a share in his affectionate reverence. Besides this, he had placed each hour of the twenty-four under a special patron. St. Joseph, his Guardian Angel, the Patrons of Spain, St. James and St. Isidore, were among the number.

The prayers of our humble Saint were more powerful than the preaching of the missionary Fathers. The prosperous town of Soller, rich with its gold-laden orange-trees and its land-locked bay of blue, had become a den of thieves and was torn with fierce faction fights. Twelve lives had already been lost in its streets and neighbourhood. Each house was a fortress and the townsfolk mounted guard with arms in their hands. Two Fathers of the Society, at the request of the Viceroy, were sent to give a mission as the only hope of gaining peace to the blood-stained town. Not more than three or four sermons had been preached when a woman, whose husband, son, and father-in-law had been murdered in the frays, came forward, and, by a public deed, forgave the assassins. All flocked to the sacraments, and the Fathers were chosen by each party as arbiters and final judges. No one doubted that these wonderful results were owing to the prayers of our Saint, to whom in fact our Lady appeared and promised that all would turn out well, and Alphonsus had told this to the Rector before the good news reached Palma.

Lay-brother though he was, his superiors used, as has been said, to make him give an exhortation in the refectory on some of the great feasts, under colour of an exercise of obedience and humility, and though he had little time for preparation, but a quarter of an hour or so, he filled all hearts with the love of the virtue on which he preached. "That is all very fine," said a Provincial who happened once to be present; "practise what you

preach. Come down and kiss the feet of the community." This act of self-abasement and obedience was a great pleasure to our Saint. From the very outset of his conversion the foundations of humility had been sunk so deep that no exaltation however great could shake the profound and unchangeable conviction he had of his utter nothingness. He had received in reward for his efforts of self-abasement so clear an insight into the misery of his own nature, that no reverence from his Superiors, no respect from the great ones of the world, none of the constant celestial favours he was receiving—so that his life seemed rather that of a dweller in Heaven than of one of that on earth,—nothing of all this could ever expose him to the slightest movement of self-complacency. Whilst he regarded his religious brethren as angels in the flesh, he fancied that the stench of his own baseness rose from his soul and tainted the very air in which he lived. And all through his life each revelation, each apparition of God and His Blessed Mother filled him with fear, lest, being so unworthy of such privileges, the whole might be, like his adventure with the hermit of San Matteo, but a delusion of the enemy.

Obedience, the virtue of a Jesuit, was necessarily the most conspicuous in St. Alphonsus. It was to give up entirely his own will and to follow that of God that he had entered religion; and so thoroughly had he realized the fact that the Superior's order was the clearest manifestation of God's will that he obeyed it with the simple heroism of Abraham, knowing that in perfect obedience was the highest perfection and the loftiest wisdom. Whatever he was told to do, he did at once and with the greatest pleasure. His clear vision of God in the person of his Superiors made him do things which to the world must appear folly, for he never reasoned, but was filled with one thought, that in hearing the voice, of no matter what Superior, he heard the voice of God. Father Alvarez, his

Rector, merely to test him, told him, when past seventy, to go to the Indies. It was then late in the day and dark. Alphonsus at once left the room just as he was, and went straight to the porter to ask him to unlock the gate. "Where are you going, Brother?" said the porter. "To India, for the Rector has sent me." But the porter, who had been warned before, refused to open the gate, because the Saint had not his "paper of obedience"—the passport of a religious, and he sent him back to the Rector. "Where were you thinking of going?" someone asked Alphonsus, "when told to start for the Indies?" "I should have gone to the port, and if I should have found a vessel, I should have embarked: if not I should have walked as far as I could into the sea and only have turned back when I could go no farther, and so have come home again."

So another time, when the students on an exhibition day were going to act a play in the college, the Rector, to prevent all the seats being filled by the first comers, gave strict orders to Alphonsus, who was then the porter, on no account to open the gate before the time. The Viceroy Manriquez and his brother, the Bishop of Palma, with their attendants, came before the hour fixed, but St. Alphonsus would not on any account let them in, spite of the angry expostulations of the retinue of the illustrious guests, till the Rector came down and explained the lay-brother's conduct, much to the edification both of the Bishop and Don Manriquez.

These were but the extraordinary actions of a life which was, by its entirely supernatural character, in perfect harmony with them; so faithful to every order, to every rule, that no one ever knew Rodriguez to swerve a hair's breadth from them; and his superiors were always quite at their ease when they had given him any thing to do, because they knew it would certainly be carried out.

Obedience sternly restrained Alphonsus in the war he waged with his body, but up to extreme old age, nay, to his very death, he treated it as ruthlessly as

he could. Besides sharing in our Lord's Passion, God had made him acquainted with all the horrors of death. The memory of all this was a constant motive for penance. Till he was sixty, he never lay on a mattress, but took his short rest in a chair, or, when he was allowed, sleeping on the bare boards, and at times on broken potsherds. He never leant on the back of his chair; he never went near a fire in the short but sharp winter, nor in the glorious spring or autumn would he pluck a flower or a fruit, when he passed the day with the community at their country-house of Our Lady of the Mount. During the last two years of his life the barber's lad took a brutal pleasure in hacking the poor old Brother's face; but not only did he make no complaint, but he gave himself up by choice to the inflictions of the brutal boy. God, however, took the cause in hand. The wretch perished by an assassin's hand. The Bishop of Majorca, Sedeño Bauza, happened to come to preach at the college, and the Rector ordered a bed to be made up for him to rest awhile. As the house was under-furnished, the mattress of the old and decrepid Brother was borrowed, and next morning it was found that he had slept with nothing but a sheet between himself and the boards, which formed the bedstead. Far from being annoyed, St. Alphonsus tried to persuade the infirmarian not to rob him of the luxury of such a mortification, though he promptly yielded at the voice of obedience and took back his mattress. So too, on the occasion of the Forty Hours during carnival time, his only chair was carried off, as the church was full, and places were found for persons of position in the tribunes and corridors. Though the chairs were piled up in one of the tribunes when done with, and could easily have been obtained for the asking, yet for a whole year the poor old man, he was past seventy, went without any thing on which to sit, or to put his clothes. Nor did he get his chair back till after the Forty Hours of the following year, when the others were taken and restored again to their proper places.

But the cross, the school of virtue, the perfect mirror of our Lord came to him under far more terrible forms. In the earliest days of his religious life, he was tormented with the fear of losing his vocation, owing to his fancied unfitness, till God gave him deep peace by a revelation of his future perseverance. Then the fear of hell and a clear vision of his sins, without a gleam of comfort, tortured his soul. He had asked for a thorough knowledge of himself; but the vision overwhelmed him. God, however, took pity on him and after a few days filled him with light and confidence. But far more awful was the struggle that followed, when by God's permission, the demon of impurity, for the long space of seven years, by every stratagem and by the most foul and seductive attacks, laid siege to his soul. All help from on high seemed to be withdrawn, and though the agony to him was far more bitter than death, and though he would gladly have been burnt alive rather than be brought face to face with sights so repulsive, his faith and love in his Divine Spouse never wavered. The foul spirits had boasted to him that they would never cease until they had made him give in; but our Blessed Lord and His Blessed Mother at length appeared and freed him from their vile attacks.

The morning's meditation was the very breath of Alphonsus' day, and as an old writer of his life puts it, the devil determined to force Bethulia to yield by cutting off the supply of living waters. Up to this time his prayer had been most fervent. Now the moment our Saint used to kneel down to his prayer, however well he might have been before, his whole body was tortured by a mysterious malady, which left him at once when the time for meditation was over. Oftentimes he fell prostrate on the ground as though he was on the point of death, so acute was the torture. During the whole period of his temptations this went on, yet never did he relax in his diligence much less abandon his prayer.

At last both trials ended, and the old delights came

back, as he communed with his God. Still his crucifixion was not over. As doubled with age he was slowly going up the stairs of the college, in a preternatural way he was thrust backwards and flew through the air till he fell so heavily on the next landing that two students who had seen what had happened, rushed to ring the college bell and brought the community out of their rooms. They all supposed that St. Alphonsus was dead, and were surprised to find nothing but two slight scars on his bald head. But he lay in acute tortures for some nights. He told his Rector that he only compared these pains to being cut in pieces by razors, when on a sudden his pains ceased and all trace of his wounds, which had till then remained, disappeared. This was only the prelude to the last and most terrible attack, for which our dear Lord had prepared him by an interior voice. Our Saint was then abandoned, like Job, to the rage of the devil, and like St. Colette, St. Hedwige, and St. Guthlac, the hermit of Croyland, he endured at the hands of the devil all the pangs of the most cruel martyrdoms. He Who sent him these trials could not but now and again console His suffering and patient victim. One night as St. Alphonsus offered himself up a willing holocaust, our Blessed Lord and His Holy Mother appeared to him in such a flood of light as to eclipse the lamp which was burning on the table, and they deigned to stay in sweet converse with the holy lay-brother. The Father in the next room, surprised to hear the strict silence of religious rule broken by voices at that hour, got up and opened St. Alphonsus' door, and the vision vanished. But our Saint drunk with the wine of heavenly joy, seemed transfigured, and all remarked the power of his words on the following day, like those of one come down from Heaven.

1615. In his last years, constant and severe illness kept the old man to his bed, but even then he used to send the infirmarian to beg his Superior to allow him to fast, and to use his customary austerities; and when able, he loved to be carried to the tribune

to hear sermons in the church or to pour out his soul before the Blessed Sacrament. The devils again attacked him with physical tortures of the most awful kind, and with thoughts of distrust in God, but he found strength and comfort in a picture of our Lady he ever kept close to him, the only treasure to which he clung, and it was but a poor old print.

III. His End in Peace.

1617. His Rector, Father Julian, was down with rheumatic fever in the last May of the Brother's life, and as the infirmarian was carrying Alphonsus to Mass, his Superior bade them bring him into his room and begged him to ask our Immaculate Mother to restore him to health. He spent the whole night in prayer and the Rector was able to say his Mass on the following morning. St. Alphonsus was confined to his bed for almost a twelvemonth, and from August had been in such exquisite pain that he had to lie perfectly still on one side. But he refused any alleviation or delicacy, saying, "Believe me, these sweets are bitter and my sufferings are very sweet." Nor did he cease any of his devotions, even lamenting with tears that he could no longer practise his much prized penances. Once for a brief space his memory went so completely lost that he could not even get through an Our Father, and he was entirely dependent on the charity of any who suggested prayers to him. Three times a week he went to confession, and as he had been accustomed to do for many years, received his Lord with the greatest reverence, getting the infirmarian to prop him up in the bed. With his own feeble hand he took off his night-cap, as his Creator entered his cell. He loved to be left alone after Communion to make a very long thanksgiving. God evidently revealed to him the date of his death, but with his usual modesty he endeavoured to conceal this knowledge. He, however, unwittingly betrayed his secret. The Minister of the house, Father Michael Redo, who had to make his annual

retreat just at that time, was anxious not to go to the usual place of retirement—Our Lady of the Mount—a mile and a half outside the city, and obtained leave to make it at home so as to be present in case of Alphonsus' death. When the sainted Brother was told this, he expressed his gratitude, because Father Redo could pray for him and be with him when he died. Thus it became known that within the eight days he would go to God.

On the 29th of October, after St. Alphonsus had received Holy Communion, all his pains ceased in an instant and he looked better in health than ever he had done. His face, hitherto always pale, was now lit up with colour, and looked beautiful, nay transfigured. He passed three days almost without opening his eyes, and without a single sign of recognition, except when the Brother Infirmarian put a little broth to his lips, when he opened his mouth and swallowed it without difficulty. His pulse was strong and regular. To all who saw him it was evident that he was in an ecstasy. Now and again there broke from his lips, "My most sweet Jesus, my best of Mothers!" After midnight, on the eve of All Saints, he suddenly awakened to consciousness, and all his tortures came back. His pulse began to fail and the community hastened to his bedside. In a voice that wrung the hearts of all, he repeated over and over again the Holy Name. Then at half-past twelve, when the prayers for the Agonizing had ended, he looked around—a thing so unusual in him—with eyes widely opened, bright with the light of another world and full of joy, upon all those present, and bending over to kiss the crucifix to which he clung, he uttered a protracted "Jesu," and went to keep the feast of All Saints in Heaven.

The body, which assumed a beauty which it had never possessed in life, was placed in a coffin and laid out in his room on the first floor. The thumb and forefinger of his right hand were found to have grown callous with the constant counting of his beads. The cell is now turned into a chapel, and contains a

statue of the Saint made not long after his death, and very striking by its realistic likeness. The news spread quickly that Alphonsus had passed away and the college was crowded with all that was most distinguished in the island. But as the house was closed to the devout sex, they begged so hard to be allowed to gaze on one who had always been considered as a Saint, that about one in the afternoon the body of St. Alphonsus was taken to the church and placed on a very lofty catafalque, and guarded by some Jesuit and Dominican Fathers from the pious larcenies of the immense crowd. Every one wished to have a rosary, or handkerchief, which had touched his remains, and the Fathers had difficulty to content the surging mass of people which thronged around. The clergy secular and regular of the city came uninvited to chant the dirge. When it was over, one of the Fathers got up into the pulpit and said a few words to try and persuade the crowd to allow the body to be buried, and to vacate the church, so as to make it ready for the feast of the morrow. But all in vain. It was only after nine at night that the Fathers were able, and that with great difficulty, to carry the remains back into the house. At last, however when the body was removed, the church was cleared and locked up, and to avoid any further demonstrations of respect, our Saint was committed in perfect privacy to his grave beside the altar of the Assumption shortly after midnight.

In spite of the unwillingness of the Fathers to allow what in their eyes was contrary to the simplicity of religious, the authorities ecclesiastical and civil of Palma insisted on a magnificent funeral taking place on All Souls' Day; and in presence of a dense crowd, Father Torrens, the intimate friend and director of Alphonsus, in a discourse of an hour and a half, lifted in part the veil which had hitherto concealed the hidden holiness of St. Alphonsus, and astonished even those who had thought they had known him intimately, with the marvels of his sanctity and the wonderful favours which Heaven had bestowed on the lowly Brother.

But God spoke still more authoritatively by the numberless signs and miracles wrought by the relics and through the intercession of our Saint. During his life-time, spite of all his efforts to conceal his miraculous powers, his gift of prophecy and of healing diseases of soul and body, had been known far and wide. Immediately after his death, in every part of the Catholic world, his name was glorified by startling prodigies; and the chapel where his body reposed was soon covered with *ex votos* and inscriptions recording the favours obtained by his prayers. The Bishop, who had known him in life, allowed the Saint's portrait to be exposed for veneration over his tomb, till such time as the Decrees of Urban VIII. forbidding all such signs of honour to any one who had not been formally beatified, caused the picture to be removed. But petition was at once made for the cause of his Beatification, and in 1632 our Saint was solemnly chosen as one of the Patrons of Majorca. It was not, however, till 1760 that the cause was so far advanced as to win for Alphonsus the title of Venerable. Only seven years later, the cruel decree of Charles III. of Spain, tore the Jesuit Fathers from each of their houses throughout the Spanish dominions and on one and the same night banished them pitilessly from the kingdom and its colonies.

The Bishop of Palma of the time took measures at once to protect the body and the other relics of the Saint, and the Society on its restoration returned once more to the College and Church of Monte Sion in 1816, to find them in perfect safety, and fresh efforts were made to procure the Beatification.

But Spain was convulsed with civil wars and only in September 1824 did the glad news reach Majorca that Leo XII., on the 31st of July, the feast of St. Ignatius, had in the house of the Gesù at Rome, placed Alphonsus on the list of the Beatified. The Society had then for a short time only recovered possession of the Church and College after its third expulsion, and splendid festivities commemorated the event. The

rarest marbles and jasper were used in the construction of the Saint's shrine. It is in the severe classical style of the period, and consists of the tomb, containing the relics of the Saint, over which is a sort of dome supported on pillars, while a statue of St. Alphonsus in glory rises over all. Through the crystal in front of the shrine you may see a waxen image of the Saint, containing his bones, clad in black velvet, with a precious crown on his head. The Church is no longer in the hands of the Society.

To our great Pontiff Leo XIII. was reserved the privilege of solemnly canonizing the humble Brother. On Sunday, the 15th of January, 1888, St. Alphonsus, and his spiritual child St. Peter Claver, were, with St. John Berchmans, and the Seven Sainted Founders of the Order of Servites, joined in one common honour.

St. John Berchmans,

Of the Society of Jesus:

THE STUDENTS' MODEL.

(1599-1621.)

BY THE REV. FRANCIS GOLDIE,

OF THE SAME SOCIETY.

I. Early Days. (1599-1616.)

In a quiet town of Belgium near the frontiers of Holland, during the last years of our Queen Elizabeth, there was living an honest master-shoemaker named John Charles Berchmans. The terrible war of the Low Countries was still raging, and Diest, the home of the shoemaker, had felt its effects. It was not a war of conquest, nor of invasion; but it was a civil and religious strife, fostered by foreign powers, by England and by France, and made doubly terrible by the cruelty of Spaniard and fanatic Reformer. But Elizabeth was growing old, and Henry IV. of France was now a Catholic, while Spain, exhausted with the long struggle, wished earnestly to bring it to an end. So peace, like the grey dawn after a stormy night, was coming up over the sacked towns and blood-stained plains of the battle-field of Europe.

So too, all over Christendom, there was a turning of that portentous tide which had risen and risen until it seemed as if it would have engulfed even the eternal Rock of Peter and the Church which is founded upon it. The holiness of the Church, one of the visible marks of her divine origin, had been sadly obscured by the worldly lives of prelates and of princes. The corruption of the

lives of men who should have been examples to their fellows had given some grounds to the wide-spread revolt against the Truth, by giving to it a decent pretext and a taking watchword—"Reform." Now the winter was nearly past, and as in a Canadian spring, so in every portion of God's garden, flowers of exquisite holiness were breaking forth, shewing that His Hand was still with His people and that His Spirit was still upon them. There were saintly bishops and saintly princes, saints among the lowly and in the cloisters; there were great awakeners of the religious spirit throughout Europe, and great missioners to carry that Faith to pagan lands which had been lost to so many Christian realms, and to win for the Church fresh continents and fresh conquests. There were prodigies of Christian charity raising up again the hospitals and the houses for orphan and outcast, and giants of mighty learning to reclaim for the truth the empire of men's minds.

But the saint of whom I am going to speak to you was none of these, and yet one of the many glories of the Catholic reaction in the 17th century, and one too who had and has still a mighty work to do. Then, as now, and as ever will be, just as the harvest depends in great part upon the sowing, so on the training up of the young, as is known by friend and foe alike, depends the spiritual future of the world. If the grammar schools of the Tudors, which took the place of the monastic schools in England, and the prohibition by penal laws of Catholic teaching, robbed our country of its faith, they were the seminaries and the colleges of the teaching orders which played the chief part both in the revival of that faith throughout Catholic Europe, and in its extension through the vast extent of the Eastern and Western Indies. So too, as the choicest fruits of these new nurseries of faith and learning, God raised up St. Stanislaus, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and St. John Berchmans to be models for the youth of later days, amidst the shipwreck of faith and the breaking up of morals.

1599. On the 13th of March, a child was born to John Charles Berchmans and to his pious wife, at the sign of "the Great and Little Moon," in a room which is now-a-days kept as a holy place. The parish church, which, like the churches of our land, had been sacked by Protestant hands, was the scene of his baptism, and to him was given the name of the great precursor, which was that, too, of his father—John. His mother, who like the mother of his glorious patron, was called Elizabeth, looked upon each of her children as a sacred trust from God, and forestalled the dawning of their reason by careful religious training. Her little boy, spite of his quick temper and precocious mind, grew up as gentle and as guileless as a lamb; and early shared his time between the school and the altar. The schoolmaster congratulated the father on a child of such promise and of such goodness. And so much did the good shoemaker prize the innocence of this precious treasure that, spite of hard times, and the long illness of his poor wife which was a source of great expense to him, he put John to board with the good old parish priest, a Premonstratensian Canon, Father Emmerick, who had a number of boys under his care in training for the priesthood. Many a well-to-do burgher of Diest would gladly have received little John into his house to be a companion and an example to his own children. But John Charles feared for his innocence in the luxury of a rich home, just as he was anxious to keep his four boys out of the streets, and away from the perils of his workshop and its apprentices; and so sent them all away to safe hands. By a sort of holy instinct our saint loved to be alone* and shrunk from other companions, spending his time in study or in prayer. Prayer easily became with him a passion, and love of his sacramental Lord so took possession of his soul that one day he begged his confessor to admit him to his first communion. There and then he had his

* "He went up into the mountain *alone* to pray."—St. Matth. xiv. 23.

general confession all ready, and on the very next Sunday he was admitted to receive from Father Emmerick's trembling hands his Lord and Love. The desire to be admitted to a higher privilege, to be a priest of the living and life-giving Victim, had already taken its place in his heart; and one reason why John was so glad to enter the old priest's house was because it was the first step to the realization of his hopes, and because he could wear as did his other companions the clerical dress. And living now so close to the Tabernacle, his love to the hidden Dweller therein only grew the stronger. To serve mass was his great delight. Nor was that other love less conspicuous—the consequence of his love of Jesus—his affection for the Mother of his Lord, and his own heavenly mother, rather it was the great characteristic of our saint. Looking down over Diest, on a height which seems all the higher as it rises out of the Flemish flats, stands the sanctuary of our Lady of Montaigu—the "peaked hill,"—or as the Flemings characteristically call it—"the hill of crutches,"—so many being hung up there, signs of marvellous cures. The star-spangled dome and stately tower at its side were not yet built, but for many years the miraculous image in the oak tree had attracted crowds of rich and poor, of soldiers and statesmen, archdukes and peasants. Even when quite little, John used often to go fasting along the three miles to pray before her statue. Nor was this love of Mary a mere devotion of the fancy: it called forth, as true love always does, the spirit of sacrifice. Every Saturday he put aside some portion of his homely meal in her honour. And it seems certain that when but a child, he vowed his virginity to our Lady. More than once in the religious dramas, so popular in those days and so profitable, the part of a hero of chastity was naturally given to our little Saint; and when, in the rôle of Daniel, he denounced the guilty elders, he was seen to tremble with emotion and indignation. There was no priggishness, nor air of superiority about the boy, but he was always so simple, so

equable in temper, so ready to oblige, so kind, that he was the favourite of all, though quite unconscious of their preference.

A cloud was gathering on the bright blue of his happy life, which threatened to shut him off, and for ever, from his one ambition. John's father was able no longer to pay for his boy at the canon's; and he insisted that it was absolutely necessary, with a sick wife and his children growing up, that John should give up his studies and take to some remunerative trade to help his family.

For a moment John was stunned with the news, but he threw himself on his knees before his father, and turning first to him, and then to his poor mother implored to be allowed to follow God's call to the Church. He was quite willing, he said, to live on bread and water, and he promised to be no further charge to his parents if only he might continue his studies. Another good priest of Diest offered him a home and bed and board for the moment; and a few days after there came a neighbour from Mechlin to say that one of the officials of the cathedral of that city was on the look out for a servant boy, who, as was often the way in those days, would wait upon him and the boarders he had in his house, and go with them to school.

So at the age of fifteen our saint went to the precentor of Mechlin, Canon Froymont, who very soon found out what a treasure he had got in John. He was so ready, so intelligent, so attentive to his work, so modest, so religious, and yet withal so gay that the other cathedral dignitaries never thought a dinner was what it ought to be, unless our Saint was there to serve it. He was mother and father to three little boys whom the canon left entirely to his charge. Two young men, pupils in the precentor's house, were afterwards to follow John to the Society of Jesus, and one of them declared that having been a Protestant he owed his conversion to the bright example of virtue shown to him by the servant boy. Even Canon Froymont was delighted to make Berch-

mans his companion when out a-walking. With the boarders, St. John used at first to attend the classes at the archiepiscopal seminary. But when in 1615 the Fathers of the Society of Jesus opened a College in Mechlin in the old palace of Charles V., John with others of Froymont's pupils went to the new college. He was admitted at once to the highest class and distinguished himself by his brilliant success, but still more by his industry, his lovableness and his unusual piety. He very soon was numbered in the lists of the Sodality of our Lady, a confraternity which is always composed of the pick of the students of the Jesuit colleges. His love of our Lady made him as pleased at being a member, as his companions were proud to have such a model sodalist.

Meanwhile a new horizon was opening out before the mind of our holy student. He had long made up his mind to be a priest; but as time went on, while reading the letters of St. Jerome, so full of brilliant pictures of the follies and dangers of the world, he determined to escape from its snares for good and all, by becoming a religious. St. Aloysius had died at the Roman College in 1591, and his life was shortly after published in Belgium. St. John read it, and not without a struggle, of which his humility was probably the cause, he recognised a clear vocation to become a member of that Society of which Gonzaga was so bright a glory. But the idea was neither lightly received, nor hastily carried out. He carefully weighed it in the balance of the sanctuary by earnest prayer and by counsel with his spiritual guides. With some money which the canon had given to John, he bestowed alms on the poor, got some Masses said before the ancient and venerated statue of the "Seat of Wisdom" in the University Church of Louvain, and offered the rest to our Lady of Montaigu. The answer came with such clearness that with his confessor's leave he bound himself by vow to follow the call, as had done St. Stanislaus, come what

might to hinder him. Indeed he needed all his courage to carry out this purpose. In a beautiful letter to his parents he told them how "now for nearly three or four months our Lord has been most evidently knocking at the door of my heart. I at first kept it shut against Him. But when I saw that whether at my studies, or on my walks, or whatever I might be doing, I always had before me the need to settle my future state of life, after many a communion, and many a good work, I have come to the conclusion, yes, I am resolved, to serve our dear Lord, with His grace, in a religious life. It is in some way hard I admit for friends and relatives to give up their children. But what would they do if our dear Lord—long may He spare them—were to call them to Himself? Sometimes too I keep thinking in my heart, if I saw before me, on the one hand, father, mother, sister, etc., and on the other God our Lord with His—and, as I trust, my own—Blessed Mother, and the first were saying to me:—'Dear child, stay with us, we beg you by the weariness and fatigues we have borne for you, etc.': and Jesus Christ on His side were to say to me, 'I have been born and scourged, and crowned with thorns, and last of all have died on a cross for you! See here My five Holy Wounds! Have I not endured all this for you? Do you not know that I have fed your soul with My Sacred Body, and slaked its thirst with My Precious Blood? And now will you prove so ungrateful to Me?' When I think of this, my dear parents, my heart sets me in such a flame that, were it possible, I would this very moment fly to religion, and my heart and my soul will never be at rest till they have found their beloved Master.

"But you will say: 'It is too soon as yet. Wait till you have taken your degrees.' I ask you if a poor man were to come a begging at your door, and you really were willing to give him something, and he were to say, 'I will come for it in a year or two;'—he could not be sure you would give it to him then,—would you not think

him a fool and a madman? Are we not all beggars in God's sight? He is pleased now, after much prayer, out of His goodness, to give me the best of alms, a vocation to religion and to the Society of Jesus, the hammer of all heresies, the vessel of virtue and perfection; and shall I tread under foot this grace of my dear Lord, and contemn it? It is doubtful whether our Lord would allow it to last for two years more. And may be I should hear from Him: 'I know you not.' So now with my whole heart I offer myself to Jesus Christ to fight under His colours. I hope you will not be so unreasonable as to oppose Him; but as, as I have read in history, the Egyptians offered their children to the crocodile, which they looked on as a god, and, while it was eating them up, the parents made high festival—so too I hope you will rejoice, as they did, and praise God and thank Him that your son should be found worthy, not to be *given* to God, for he does not belong to you, but to be restored to Him. I commend myself to your good prayers that our dear Lord may grant to me perseverance to the end of my life, and to you with me, hereafter, eternal life.—JOHN BERCHMANS."

This is but one of the many beautiful letters, preserved to us of our Saint, in which he "is not dead but speaking." To those who do not know the force of affection and the power it has to blind the judgment, such a letter addressed to such parents could surely have but one reply. But our Saint's father, like many another parent, would not hear of his son's entering religion. He went over to Mechlin, and, failing to move John, roundly rated John's confessor with having put the idea into the youth's head. He urged that after having spent so much money upon his education he could not sacrifice the support which he looked for at his hands. The confessor who had encountered similar difficulties from his own father—a shoemaker like Berchmans—answered with such good reasons that he seemed to have gained his point. But it was not so. John's mother had a relation in the

Franciscan house in Mechlin, and his father asked him to consult those religious on the matter of his call. He obeyed, and though his mother had engaged the community to do all they could on her behalf, the clear replies John made to all their objections convinced them that the call was from God. His relation, however, was not so ready to give in, and persecuted John with his repeated attacks, coming again and again to the precentor's, till at last the young man took the friar firmly by the arm, and showed him quietly to the door.

His parents still hoped against hope, but, to a fresh appeal for delay, our Saint wrote a short and apostolic letter to say that in another fortnight he was resolved to enter the noviciate. His father would have wished him to come over to Diest to say good-bye, but good Canon Froymont was anxious to spare the boy further heart-rending, and so John wrote to invite his parents over to Mechlin. It was a painful parting. The cordwainer, as a last effort, told John he must not look to him for a groat to enable him to carry out his purpose. "See, father," was his answer, "if the very clothes I have on kept me back, I would strip them off, and follow Christ like the young man who cast away his linen cloth."

II. Religious Life in Belgium. (1616–1618.)

A part of the old Palace of Charles V., of which a small portion is still standing, served at once for the college and the novice house of the Society at Mechlin. Thither on a Saturday, on the feast of our Lady of Mercy, Sept. 24th, 1616, with two of his companions, one of whom was to enter with him, went John, unable to control his joy at the near realization of all his desires. "O brother," he said to the one who was a postulant like himself, "may we live together for ever in the Society in

heaven, as together we are entering for God's sake into His Society on earth!" There was a lay-brother busy working in the garden. "There," said John, "how can we make a better start than here at once by the practice of charity and humility?" So they set to to help the brother until the Rector and some other fathers approached to welcome the new comers.

A hundred or so of many nations and various ages were within those holy walls, being trained to the high perfection demanded by the rules and constitutions, then so fresh from the pen of St. Ignatius of Loyola. And more like two hundred came and went during the two years our Saint passed in the school of holiness. But far ahead of them all shot our holy novice, so that, such was his diligence in God's service, in a short while he surpassed even those who had been there for twenty-four months in his exactness and in his fervour. They all looked upon him as an angel in the flesh. And though he began with the firm resolution of being a saint, and, as he said, "a great saint too;" though he carried out his resolution in real earnest, by stern and constant self-restraint, and all the mortification which his superior would permit, he was ever so bright and cheerful that he got the name of Brother Hilarious, or the holy Hilarius.

The secret of his rapid progress was his care in little things, or, as he put it, "not so much the doing great things, as doing well whatever one is told." Whether it was learning French, of which the young Fleming knew not a word when he arrived, or trimming the lamps—a work painful and dirty, ambitioned by him probably because St. Aloysius had sought for it—or preparing his meditation, all was done as work should be done for God, with all possible painstaking, in the best way, leaving nothing untried to secure success.

He was never known to violate any rule or approved custom of the house; so that a novice who afterwards became one of the literary glories of Flanders declared that

no study of his rules, no prayerful meditation upon them ever moved him so much to their practice as the faithfulness of St. John in their observance. His excellence was not negative. His past success at school, the proofs he gave in the noviciate of remarkable ability and of clear-headed judgment, all showed that his talents were far above the average. He had a very marked character. But so completely did he keep himself in hand, so firm and constant his guard over himself, that in word, in action, in his outer man Berchmans appeared to be faultless. Neither his superiors nor the companions with whom he lived could find in him anything blameworthy. On one occasion he begged his novice-master to subject him to a humiliation, customary as part of the training of the noviciate, of being told his faults by his religious brethren. They were ordered to jot down anything they might have noticed. But when their notes were sent in not one of the hundred young men had found anything to say against St. John. He had not been in religion a year before he was given a post of no small responsibility, that of porter, a sort of adjutant to the novice-master, to whom was entrusted the duty of carrying out all the details of domestic duty and of seeing to the regularity and order of the noviceship. This very elevation only made his humility and charity more conspicuous. If for any breach of discipline he was told to enjoin a penance on the offender, he begged to be allowed to bear the punishment himself; nor did he ever report an offence without first seeking light from his Divine Master in the tabernacle.

His devotion to his Lord in the Blessed Sacrament was a natural outcome of his ardent love of God, and this love was contagious. Again and again during the day, at any leisure moment, he was to be found kneeling absorbed and motionless in the presence of his Lord. Holy Communion was his greatest happiness, and he hungered after that food of angels. The love of Mary, which had possessed his soul from earliest childhood, of

her to whom he owed his vocation, grew swiftly in the blessed atmosphere of John's life of prayer and self-denial. Her name was ever on his lips, and never did he join his brethren in recreation but he spoke her praises. He got others to become the apostles of her honour. Then, as in after life, the high privilege of her Immaculate Conception attracted very specially his devotion. To his spiritual guides every secret of his soul was manifest, and it is recorded of one of them how deeply humiliated he felt in the presence of this revelation of youthful holiness; a holiness never satisfied with itself, but ever like the great St. Francis Xavier crying out, "More, O Lord! yet more!"

Spite of the extraordinary insight the Saint possessed into his own heart, spite of the magnifying glass with which his humility enlarged his seeming defects, his confessors imagined themselves in face of an angel rather than a creature subject to human frailties. Yet all the while so full was he of his own nothingness that he was forced to confess that he had really little to fear from the robber and bane of all merit—self-conceit and pride. After but one year of probation St. John had been admitted to the privilege of binding himself to God by private vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

1618. On the 25th of September, joyfully and with a great heart he publicly took the vows of the Society of Jesus, and, as far as he could, offered himself for ever to his good Lord in the Society to which he had been called. He left the world, but the world or what are dearest in it had left him. His mother had gone to her reward shortly after he began his noviciate; and his father, who would have wished to have followed the example of his holy son, as did another of his children some eight years later, was prevented from so doing by the care of his family, and entered the ranks of the secular clergy, having been ordained a priest a few months before St. John finished his noviciate.

A new phase of life began for our Saint. His soul had been devoured by a desire to do and suffer for his Lord, and to take his part in the great struggle with evil under the banner of truth. His daily prayer was that he might be fitted for whatever work for God the Society should ask at his hands. And now the answer came that he was to go to Rome to prosecute his philosophical studies at the Gregorian University, the *Alma Mater* of the Society, or, as it is best known, the Roman College. St. John wrote to his father asking him to come over to meet him and to say good-bye, but he learnt from one of his school-fellows the sad news that his well-loved parent had died a week before—nor had any one broken to him the sad news. This made the sharp trial all the more hard to bear.

He commended his orphaned brothers and sisters warmly to their relations and to the good precentor, and then, like St. Ignatius and St. Stanislaus, went his way to the Holy City.

III. St. John Berchmans at Rome. (1618–1621.)

1618. Our Saint, then nineteen years of age, set out at the close of October on his long journey and on foot through France and Italy, with another young Belgian religious of his own age. The fatigues of the journey were forgotten in the delight of going to Rome, there to see the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and the General of the Society, and to pray at the tombs of the great Apostles and of St. Ignatius and St. Aloysius. There was too the hope that at the headquarters of his Order he would more easily obtain the long-desired order to go to China or some other heathen and martyr-haunted mission. Wherever he passed, St. John left an undying memory of his wise and holy conversation. It was on Christmas Eve that the dome and towers of Loreto came up before the

pilgrims on a slope that must have recalled to him the loved sanctuary of Montaigu. What a joy to hear the midnight Mass in presence of that lowly roof which had sheltered Mary and the Incarnate Word! The good folk who crowded the spacious basilica gazed in wonder at the worn and transfigured face of the young Fleming, as amidst all the vast throng, he knelt out the long service motionless and rapt in prayer, and they thought him another Aloysius Gonzaga, or some prince in disguise come from afar to spend the Christmas within the Holy House.

The last night of the year, when all Rome throngs to join in the *Te Deum* in the stately church of the Gesú, the two way-farers were welcomed with a fatherly embrace by Mercius Vitelleschi, the General of the Society of Jesus. Berchmans spent a day or two in the house attached to the Gesú, now some Government offices of the Italian kingdom, the home of many a saint. Some novices, who were there to wait at table, when they went home to their noviciate of St. Andrew on the Quirinal, assured their novice-master, that the young Belgian just arrived was a portent of holiness.

On January 2nd, St. John took up his quarters in the vast Roman College, in a room, once occupied by St. Aloysius, who had died in the infirmary there, nearly a quarter of a century before. But many there were who still remembered the angel of the Gonzagas, and the common feeling was, that he had come back again amongst them in the person of Berchmans, and better than he in one external point, in his greater amiability of manner. Some there were, who thought that this bloom of virtue must soon wear off, and that it was merely a novice's piety, more on the surface than deeply rooted. But those who came to know him more closely soon formed a different judgment. "Do not spoil my little Fleming," said the Father Minister—the second in command—to young Oliva, the future general of the

order, "for he is, I assure you, good, good, very good; nor will his virtues," he added, "prove to be false." It is fortunate for us that Father Cepari, the confessor and biographer of St. Aloysius, was the Rector of the Roman College during the time of St. John. From him, no secret of the Saint's soul was hidden, and he knew him thoroughly within and without; and the biography which he has left us of Berchmans deserves the praise of the late Father Faber of being "perfect in its way."

Men of great eminence in learning and holiness were amongst the contemporaries of St. John in the College, both as teachers and learners; and amongst the members who thronged the schools were students of every nation, many of whom in after life were to hold high positions in Church or State, or to spend themselves in the missions at home and abroad. There were Ward, Ann, Vavasour, Constable, Pole, Harvey, and Huddleston, Walpole, Dormer, Neville, and Courtenay, Salvin, Rookwood, and other good names, among the English students who sat on the benches of the college, while Berchmans was there, and who carried the memory of his holiness to our persecuted land. His light was not put under a bushel, but plain for all to see; and everyone who came across him, or knew him however slightly, was struck by the radiance of heavenly modesty that beamed from his bright and engaging face, so placid yet so intelligent spite of its ever down-cast eyes.

Though so highly gifted, St. John spared no pains to succeed in his studies. With perfect order and method unflinchingly adhered to, with careful husbanding of every moment of time, he stirred himself up to work by the thought that men who study simply for honour's sake, do it with such a will, and "Shall I," he said, "be less jealous of God's glory than they are of their own?" He lost no chance of self-improvement, and learnt to speak Italian as he had learnt French with a correctness and elegance rarely found in a foreigner. He thought of

obtaining leave to spend some time in the English College, and then in the German College to perfect himself in the languages of both before returning to Flanders, feeling the truth of the saying, that "the man who knows several languages is worth as many men as the number of tongues he has acquired." But these off studies, these ambitious schemes for a future which never came, did not distract him from his great work; and so successful was he in his philosophy that, at the end of his course, he was selected to defend against all comers in public tourney the whole field of that vast subject. It was a sight to see that modest, bashful young man with skilful parry and thrust, with the happiest memory, with keenest analysis meet the many adversaries who took up arguments against him, and win applause from all by his brilliant defence of the thesis entrusted to him.

But higher far was Berchmans' ambition to be a saint than to be a scholar. No care, no painstaking, no foresight was too great to ensure this noblest end. His fidelity from childhood, the jealous watchfulness of his parents had enabled him in the secret of his heart to thank God for the greatest of His gifts, for having preserved unstained by grievous sin the white robe of baptism. But not content with so high a favour, he hedged round his treasure with a hedge of thorns. Spite of a delicate constitution, and of the wear of a climate not his own, and of studies pursued with such ardour, he refused every pleasure to his senses; and unable to do the penance he desired, he closed his eyes to the great religious pageants, to the splendid progresses and pomps of the centre of Catholic life and worship. He practised the most rigorous poverty, refusing to keep anything but what was strictly necessary. He bore the keen shafts of the short but piercing winter, and the oppressive heat of the Roman summer, never seeking any alleviation, any exception in clothing or food. His extraordinary and unchanging fidelity to every regulation, to every autho-

rized practice, his prompt and punctual obedience to every order of those over him were, as he said, his most severe penance—"My greatest penance is common life." And no example of others, no human respect, no natural weariness, ever betrayed him into the smallest breach of the many rules which surrounded him, or into the smallest violation of the wish of any superior. There was no pettiness, nor scrupulosity, no straining at trifles and being careless about things of importance, but he saw that to him, called as he was by God to that particular form of life, each rule, each expression of the will of those to whom His Eternal Lord had delegated His authority was an expression of His all-holy Will, and therefore the one thing worth doing. "The more you love your rule, the more will you make progress," was one of his sayings. This was the motive of all his obedience, and his fixed law was "to find God ever in his superiors."

Of his love of poverty we have already spoken, and of his innocence. But upon that bridal dress he wrought "inæstimabiles margaritas," he broidered it over with priceless pearls. St. Ignatius of Loyola in a letter on obedience, which is one of the most perfect treatises on that most difficult and unworldly virtue, quotes St. Leo, who says, "Nothing is hard to the humble, nothing difficult to the meek;" and this is merely the teaching of the greater Master, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." In the last year but one of Brother John's life he devoted all his powers to acquire the virtue of humility. "Contempt of self is a short cut to perfection, and it causes great peace of soul," is one of the echoes of the teachings of holy writers which he had made his own. He always, without affectation as without ceremony, chose when he could the last and lowest place. He took every opportunity to do humble and menial offices for others. He looked upon himself as admitted to his Order out of pure charity, and so took everything that was done to him in that spirit. When one Holy Week he had been sent out to help at the

services in the Jesuit Church in Frascati and the road was heavy and miry, he carried off his brothers' shoes and cleaned and brushed them for them. He was fond of serving the community at table, and he watched his chance, when any happened to come in late, to stay behind and to see to their wants. He was very fond, too, of spending the time of recreation with the lay-brothers, and, when his turn came round to distribute the broken meat to the poor at the door, it was to him a high holiday.

Cardinal Maurice, of the ducal House of Savoy, came in great state one day to the College, and was welcomed by a polyglot academy of set speech-making, in which twenty-seven religious of various nationalities each in their own tongue held forth on a theme suggested by the 8th chapter of the Book of Wisdom. John was chosen to speak in Flemish, and to him fell strangely enough, if it had not been especially selected for him, to develop the text: "And I shall be admired in the sight of the mighty." The moment his part was done, he made his way back to the sub-minister, and asked for some work in the kitchen, and when he was told there was none, he went off to pray in the church. Just as at Mechlin, he had the charge of the lamps for the various passages, no light task, but a labour of love because, as remarked, obtained by St. Aloysius. Charity was the virtue St. John had chosen as the one specially to be aimed at the last year of his life. Always blind to the failings of others, he noted down the various points which pleased him in those around him. He had a life-long and special affection for any father whoever in any way had been his superior. But none even of the four brothers, who in succession shared his room with him, could ever say too much of his thoughtful kindness, of his fear of any way inconveniencing them, his ingenuity of taking upon himself any work that was to be done, making the beds or sweeping or tidying the room. Though free from any tinge of affectation and with

rather less than more of the Italian politeness, he showed constantly a genuine love of all his brethren, new or old, without any distinction—unless in favour of the sick, the suffering, or the lowly. He was specially fond of the society of the simple lay-brothers. He was ever at the beck and call of all. He had the care of the men-servants, not lay-brothers, who helped in the work of the house, and he was unsparing in his watchfulness over them and in bringing them regularly to the sacraments.

But all this beautiful life took its rise from that hidden source known only to those, and even to them only in part, to whom Berchmans, as by rule obliged, unveiled the hiddenmost depths of his soul; a source known now even better to us by the notes written by him for his own use, which escaped destruction at his hands only by his sudden illness. As he knew well, prayer is the first condition of grace, of progress, of perseverance, and so while for God's glory he threw himself so thoroughly into his studies, he valued above all success in the schools, success in the art of prayer. St. Ignatius, a master in that difficult work, has left careful directions how to light the fire, how to guard it when lit, and how to fan it into flame, and these directions became part of the daily life of our Saint, so faithfully did he observe them and make them his own. His hour of prayer in the morning made its warmth felt in his frequent communions, in his daily Mass, in every action of the well filled day. You could not speak to him, but, naturally, the current of his thoughts showed itself in his words. God and the things of God were the favourite topics of his conversation; and even great theologians, and learned professors, and men of extraordinary holiness, the men of choice of the Society, then living in Rome, loved to share his company in order to profit by his conversation. As an arrow to its mark, so naturally and necessarily to the Blessed Sacrament was attracted all the love of John's inflamed heart. He loved to serve Mass; he loved to snatch a spare moment from his studies to go before the Tabernacle. Busy though he

was, he gave up the whole of his mornings after communion to purely spiritual work. Often so enchained was he, that, when the time of the visit to the Blessed Sacrament was over, his companions had to rouse him to the memory of things around him. Yet he never allowed his devotions to make him forget the smallest duty when taking part at the altar in any public ceremony, though his devotion and reverence were not the less. When the relics of St. Aloysius were being solemnly translated to a chapel of our Lady, in the old church of the college, St. John assisted as acolyte. A venerable Father who had known Gonzaga said to his companion, "This youth seems another Aloysius." And we read of a gentleman so attracted by the ardent expression and fixed attention of Berchmans when at vespers at the Church of the Gesú, that he never failed to be present to feast his eyes on the sight of a living saint, and people in the street used to stop and gaze after him as he passed.

And as he grew in love for Jesus, so too grew his love for Mary. He thought the day was lost if he had not said something in her praise. He placed under her care his fragile health, his advance in holiness, and his progress in his studies. He vowed to defend her great prerogative of the Immaculate Conception, and signed the vow with his blood. He began to collect materials for a work, of which he had already formed the general plan, in defence of this privilege of our Lady. To him we owe the little Rosary of the Immaculate Conception, now approved and indulgenced by the Church.

IV. A Precious Death. (1621.)

1621. Returning home one day in July from a visit with the well-known historian, Father Strada, to his well-loved shrine of our Lady, Saint Mary Major's, St. John was listening to the story of the peaceful and happy deaths

of those who had died in the Father's time in the Roman College. "Pray God, Brother John," said the Father, "my soul may die the death of the just." "Father," Berchmans rejoined in a tone so unusual in one whose deference to others was so remarkable, "we ought to say, 'may my soul *live* the life of the just,' that thus we may be able afterwards to say, 'may my soul *die* the death of the just!'" There was a note struck by these words soon to be better understood. And yet it was but the expression of our Saint's daily habit of mind. "Love of God," he wrote down in his notes this year, "is only to live from day to day, from hour to hour."

The hard work of preparation for his public defension, through the unwholesome heat of a Roman summer, had tried his northern and delicate constitution. The truth was beginning to dawn more clearly upon him, when on St. Ignatius' feast, July 31st, he drew the ticket, as was the custom, of a patron saint for the coming month, and the motto on it was, "Take heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is." The whole truth at once flashed upon him, that he told the good news to more than one in the college. A few days after he was slightly unwell, but that did not prevent his going to take part by his superior's wish in a theological disputation at the Greek college, spite of the distance and the burning heat. That night the insidious Roman fever had seized him, and the following day he felt bound to tell his superior of his state, and he was sent off to bed in the infirmary. Now he hoped indeed that his time was come. And matters got rapidly worse, for the fever robbed him of his sleep, and, on St. Laurence's day, inflammation of the lungs set in, and his strength began rapidly to give way. St. John talked to all that came to see him of death and of heaven as a general might speak of a war and certain victory. His only trouble was the inconvenience and expense to which he was putting the house, and as he told his superior, he feared besides were he to die, as his companion from Belgium had already done, it might cause some unpleasantness

with the fathers of his native land, who would not like to send any more students to Rome, and so would weaken the tie of charity between the various provinces of his Order. But otherwise, "My wish," he said, "is rather to go than to stay." That night he could get no sleep, and our Saint turned to talk to the infirmarian who was watching by him, and when the brother told him he thought he ought to receive Viaticum, John, spite of his prostration, leapt up and flung his arms around his neck in a long, joyful embrace. The poor brother answered his delight with bitter sobs, but the dying youth did his very best to comfort him. And so the early morning passed, till at half-past four our Saint, dressed in his habit, and lying on the mattress on the floor, welcomed his Sacramental Lord. The moment the rector approached his side, John rose from his couch, and threw himself upon his knees. He would have fallen back, had not two of his brothers borne him up. Kneeling thus, he made, in Latin, a magnificent act of faith. "I declare that there is here really present the Son of God the Father Almighty, and of the most blessed Mary, ever a virgin; I protest that I wish to live and die a true son of our holy Mother, the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, a true son of the blessed Virgin Mary, a son of the Society." Then he received Viaticum and Extreme Unction, and he was the only one in the room who was calm and unmoved.

All the rest were so overcome as to be unable to do else but weep, even the Father Rector could hardly pronounce the words of the ritual. When all was over his superior asked him if he would like to say anything to console his brethren, and St. John whispered into his ear that his greatest consolation was that, never since he entered the Society, had he committed a deliberate venial sin, or wilfully broken a rule, or disobeyed the order of a superior. The very fact of his making such an avowal was taken by all as a certain proof of his foreknowledge of speedy death. St. John begged as a last favour to

be allowed to bid good bye to all, and for a long time he gave and received his last messages. To all he recommended great love of our Lady, great zeal for prayer, and fidelity to the rules of the Society.

The next day, Thursday, the twelfth of August, was spent by St. John in prayer, and in saying loving words of counsel and farewell. He said plainly he would die on the morrow, and when late in the evening the prayers were said for a departing soul, he begged them to insert in the Litany the Saints of the Society, and among them St. Alphonsus Rodriguez,* who had died scarcely four years back, and who now is joined with St. John in the glory of canonization.

Twice in the night terrible storms of temptation came over the soul of the dying youth, and then with rule book, and crucifix, and his rosary twisted round them in his wasted hands, he lay waiting for death. The Litany of our Lady was being recited by one of the community, and St. John repeated each petition, even correcting the father when, as, he was gazing into Berchmans' face, he made some slight mistake. When the titles "Virgin of Virgins," "Mother most chaste," "Queen of Virgins" were pronounced, St. John shewed most special signs of devotion, making a reverence to a picture of our Blessed Lady. Thus at eight o'clock on Friday, August 13th, 1621, with his eyes on his crucifix, and with the holy names of Jesus and Mary on his lips, he went to his reward.

His death was followed by an outburst of devotion in Rome that made his funeral a scene of turmoil from the crowds that pressed around his holy remains, and sought to secure some relic of the Saint.

Miracles were wrought in Belgium as in Rome, and crowned heads petitioned for his beatification. Pius IX., on May 3rd, 1865, published the decree. On the 11th, his relics were solemnly translated to their present

* See his Life, issued in the same series as the present.

resting-place, beneath the altar of our Lady in the church of the Roman College, which faces the splendid shrine of St. Aloysius.

1888. At length, Leo XIII., on January the 15th, amidst the splendid festivities of his Sacerdotal Jubilee, solemnly canonized the Belgian student, and completed the Three of youthful Jesuit Saints—Stanislaus, Aloysius and John.

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